Pacific Youth Health Entrepreneurship in Auckland Aotearoa New Zealand;

Using Talanoa Participatory Action Research to support Pacific youth

to develop fruit and vegetable enterprises.

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
CSS	Centre for Samoa Studies
MBIE	Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoHNZ	Ministry of Health New Zealand
MoHS	Ministry of Health Samoa
MoWCSD	Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development
MPP	Ministry of Pacific Peoples
NCD	Non-communicable Disease
NUS	National University of Samoa
SNYC	Samoa National Youth Council
UPF	Ultra Processed Foods
WHO	World Health Organisation

Glossary

Term	Definition
Aiga	A Samoan word meaning family, extending beyond the nuclear household to include extended kinship networks. Central to social identity, belonging, and support systems in Samoan culture.
Alofa	A Samoan term for love, compassion, and care. Alofa is expressed in relationships, service, and reciprocity within families and communities.
Fa'a Samoa	"The Samoan way," referring to the cultural values, practices, and traditions that guide Samoan identity and societal organisation.
Fa'aaloalo	Respect, a foundational value in Samoan society. It governs relationships, communication, and social conduct, particularly towards elders and those in positions of authority.
Fa'aiuga	Conclusion, decision, or outcome. In research, this term can also refer to the reflective or evaluative phase where insights are drawn together.
Fa'asoa	To share, distribute, or give to others. It reflects reciprocity and collective responsibility within Samoan communities.
Fa'atino	To carry out, implement, or put into action. In research and community contexts, it signifies the enactment of ideas, responsibilities, or cultural practices.
Health	A state of physical, mental, social, and spiritual wellbeing rather than merely the absence of disease. In Pacific contexts, health is relational and collective, shaped by family, community, culture, and environment.
Healthy lifestyle	A holistic approach to living that includes balanced nutrition, regular physical activity, mental wellbeing, social connectedness, and avoidance of harmful practices. It reflects both individual choices and broader environmental and cultural influences.
Lite	A food product that is labelled as 'Reduced', 'Light' or 'Lite' must be at least 25% lower in at least one typical nutrient, such as sugar, fat or sodium than the standard product. For example, a 'Lite' soy milk contains 70% less fat than the regular version.

Low calorie	A term used to describe foods or beverages that provide fewer calories than comparable standard products. It is often promoted as supporting weight management or healthier diets.
Sugar free	A label that indicates food or beverages contain no added sugars or negligible sugar content. Products may use alternative sweeteners, which carry varying health implications.
Teu le Vā	A Samoan cultural principle meaning to nurture, respect, and maintain the relational space (vā) between people, communities, and the environment. It emphasises care, reciprocity, and balance to sustain harmony and collective well-being in all relationships.
Vā	The sacred relational space between people, communities, and the environment. It signifies connection, respect, and balance within relationships. In Samoan thought, vā is not an empty space but a space that must be nurtured (teu le vā) to maintain harmony and well-being.
Va'ava'ai	To look after, watch over, or care for someone or something. In relational terms, it highlights attentiveness and responsibility within social and cultural relationships.
Vā fealoa'i	Vā fealoa'i meaning "to nurture the space bet ween people; and between people and Nature" The relational space that guides respectful social interactions between people. It reflects principles of mutual respect, reciprocity, and appropriate conduct within relationships, helping to maintain social harmony and collective dignity.
Vā feavata'i	The relational space that emphasises cooperation, shared responsibility, and mutual support. It reflects interconnectedness and collaboration among individuals or groups, reinforcing unity and collective purpose within the community.
Whole foods	Foods that are minimally processed and consumed in their natural state, such as fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains. They are often associated with higher nutritional value and health benefits.

List of Publications and Conferences

Peer-reviewed Journal Publications

Publications and Conferences from this PhD

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Other publications (Authored/Co-authored)

Garden, E., Sa'u Lilo, L., 'Ofanoa, M., Field, A., Witten, K., So'onalole, T. N., & Tupou, S. (2025). Street redesign, active mobility and well-being for Pacific elders. *Kōtuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online*, *20*(4), 484-506. https://doi.org/10.1080/1177083X.2024.2377566

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Conn, C., Said, A., Sa'u Lilo, L., Fairbairn-Dunlop, P., Antonczak, L., Andajani, S., & Ofa Blake, G. (2016). Pacific Talanoa and Participatory Action Research: Providing a space for Auckland youth leaders to contest inequalities. *Australian National University: Crawford* School of Public Policy bulletin

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Conference Presentations

Cammock, R., Sa'u Lilo, L., Tonumaipe'a, D., & Conn, C. (2022, December 7-9). Tackling obesity in the Pacific whilst developing a sustainable and healthy food systems. [Paper presentation]. DEVNET Conference. Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. https://devnet.org.nz/conferences/devnet-2022-conference/

Conn, C., Said, A., Sa'uLilo, L., Fairbairn-Dunlop, P., Antonczak, L., Andajani, S., & Blake, G. O. (2014, November). Pacific Talanoa and Participatory Action Research: Providing a space for Auckland youth leaders to contest inequalities. International Pacific health conference, Auckland, New Zealand

Sa'uLilo, L., Tautolo, E., & Smith, M. (2015, November). *Health literacy among Pacific mothers in New Zealand: Exploring the associations of demographic and behavioural factors in relation to health literacy of Pacific mothers in the context of Pacific health and well-being.* Thesis presented at the 43rd Annual Conference of the comparative and International Education Society (OCIES) Conference, Port Vila, Vanuatu

Other Theses

Sa'uLilo, L. (2016). *Health literacy among Pacific mothers in New Zealand: Exploring the associations of demographic and behavioural factors with health literacy of Pacific mothers in the context of Pacific health and Well-being.* [Master's thesis, Auckland University of Technology]. Tuwhera. https://openrepository.aut.ac.nz

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 in the acknowledgements), nor used artificial intelligence tools or generative artificial intelligence tools (unless it is clearly stated, and referenced, along with the purpose of use), 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."

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Ethics approval

Ethics approval for this research was granted by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) on the 20th of September, 2020, application number 20/230. See Appendix 1 for ethics approval letter.

Thesis Abstract

In this thesis, I explore Pacific youth health entrepreneurship in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand, focusing on how Pacific youth can be supported to develop fruit and vegetable enterprises that contribute to good health outcomes. This research is situated within the context of youth as transformative leaders, persistent health inequities, and the rising burden of non-communicable diseases among Pacific communities, where diet-related risks remain a major contributor to poor health. Recognising the potential of Pacific youth as innovators, leaders, and change Pacific youth, I sought to understand how participatory and culturally grounded approaches could foster entrepreneurship that strengthens both health and community well-being.

I adopted a Talanoa Participatory Action Research (TPAR) methodology, grounded in Pacific research epistemologies, to guide the research process. Twelve Pacific youth engaged in iterative cycles of talanoa, reflection, and action. Their storytelling (in the Pacific sense) or data (in the Western context) were generated through talanoa sessions with meaningful collective storytelling and were thematically analysed using a Pacific lens. The TPAR process itself became an artefact of knowledge, embodying the collective wisdom, creativity, and aspirations of Pacific youth and how this may benefit wider Pacific communities.

The findings reveal that Pacific youth envision fruit and vegetable enterprises as opportunities for economic sustainability and culturally anchored pathways for promoting healthy eating, strengthening identity, and building intergenerational connections. The TPAR artefact highlight's themes of cultural values, community reciprocity, health advocacy, and digital innovation as central to Pacific youth entrepreneurship. Importantly, the study demonstrates how culturally embedded participatory methods, such as TPAR, can empower youth to lead enterprise solutions while challenging structural barriers to health equity.

This research contributes to Pacific community practice by providing a model of youth-led, culturally grounded health entrepreneurship. It offers insights for policymakers and practitioners seeking to address Pacific health inequities through strategies that integrate entrepreneurship, food security, and cultural identity. More broadly, the thesis advances scholarship on decolonial methodologies and participatory approaches that position Pacific youth as Pacific youth of change in health and enterprise innovation.

Chapter 1

Introduction

An eating regime that includes the consumption of a varied source of fruits and vegetables is essential. The Ministry of Health (MoH, 2023) New Zealand recommends two servings of fruit and six servings of vegetables daily for the prevention of chronic diseases and fostering overall health and well-being; ultimately, enhancing quality of life. However, 46% of the Pacific population in Aotearoa New Zealand are not meeting this recommendation (MoH, 2023). Pacific youth represent an underutilised yet powerful force for transforming dietary behaviours. With over 60% of the Pacific population in Aotearoa identifying as youth (Prakash, 2022), they are well positioned to lead change in various ways, including in entrepreneurship.

Pacific youth health-based or social entrepreneurship is a relatively new and evolving concept, gaining traction globally and more recently in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. It is an approach that holds significant promise for addressing public health challenges, encouraging healthier lifestyles, and contributing to the prevention and management of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). This study adopted a Talanoa Participatory Action Research (TPAR) methodology to explore the experiences and ideas of Pacific youth, with a focus on promoting healthy eating, supporting fruit- and vegetable-based entrepreneurship, and addressing NCD prevention and management. Through a series of iterative talanoa sessions, the research was practice-oriented and participatory, aiming to elevate youth voices and contributions. The output of this study is presented through both this exegesis and a TPAR based artefact.

1.1.Background

The Pacific population in Aotearoa New Zealand is youthful and rapidly growing, with a median age of 23 years compared to 38 years for the general population (Statistics New Zealand, 2019). Similarly, across the Pacific region, youth constitute a significant proportion of national populations, with nearly 60% of people under the age of 25 years (Auckland Council Social and Economic Research and Evaluation Team, 2025; Bade, 2025; Prakash, 2022). This demographic profile underscores both the opportunities and

challenges associated with supporting Pacific youth to achieve their full potential in health, education, and economic participation.

Pacific youth face a range of pressing health challenges, particularly in relation to NCDs. The prevalence of obesity, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and other diet-related conditions is disproportionately high among Pacific peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand (MoH. 2021) and the wider region (MoH, 2021; World Health Organization [WHO], 2022). These conditions are linked to low fruit and vegetable consumption; food insecurity; and limited access to affordable, healthy foods (Fa'alili-Fidow et al., 2022; Rush et al., 2025). As a result, Pacific youth inherit an environment where structural inequities in health and nutrition continue to shape outcomes across generations.

These inequities are exacerbated by food system pressures, including urbanisation, the high cost of fresh produce, and the dominance of imported and ultra-processed foods in Pacific markets (Bell et al., 2021; Snowdon et al., 2013). While fresh fruit and vegetables are promoted as essential for preventing chronic diseases and improving well-being, their affordability and accessibility remain significant barriers for many Pacific families (Utter et al., 2018). Such pressures contribute to a cycle in which convenience foods are consumed in place of traditional, nutrient-dense diets.

At the same time, the entrepreneurship landscape for Pacific youth is complex. High levels of youth unemployment and underemployment persist in both Aotearoa New Zealand and Pacific Island nations (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2017). Yet, Pacific communities have long traditions of collective and relational forms of economic activity, where cultural values such as reciprocity, service, and communal responsibility influence how income is generated and shared (Cox & Faleolo, 2022; Prescott, 2008). These traditions provide an important foundation for youth-led enterprise development that is both culturally grounded and responsive to contemporary needs.

Given these conditions, linking entrepreneurship and health offers a promising pathway. Health entrepreneurship can empower Pacific youth to take leadership in shaping food environments, while simultaneously providing economic opportunities that align with cultural values and community aspirations (Tuafuti, 2016). In this way, youth

entrepreneurship serves a dual function: addressing immediate challenges of unemployment while contributing to longer-term goals of improved nutrition and reduced NCD prevalence.

Within this context, fruit and vegetable enterprises are needed. By engaging Pacific youth in creating, designing, and developing such enterprises, there is potential to strengthen access to fresh produce, reduce food insecurity, and encourage healthier eating behaviours. This approach contributes to individual and community well-being and aligns with regional and global priorities to address NCDs through culturally appropriate, sustainable, and community-led strategies (Pacific Community, 2018; WHO, 2014).

1.2. Pacific People and Fruit and Vegetable Uptake

The need for culturally tailored interventions to promote healthier eating habits within Pacific communities in Aotearoa New Zealand is urgently needed. Despite the importance of consuming fruits and vegetables for good health outcomes, Pacific peoples of all ages are facing difficulties in meeting the recommended dietary requirements for good health outcomes. The MoH (2025) survey in 2023/24, showed 47.1% of Aotearoa New Zealand adults aged 15 to 64 years of age met the daily fruit intake recommendation of two or more servings per day. However, only 9.1% consumed the recommended five to six servings of vegetables per day. Of these, 25.6% of Pacific adults meet the combined recommendation of at least three servings of vegetables and two servings of fruit daily with more than 60% of Pacific adults falling short of this threshold. Similar findings among children aged 2 to 14 years revealed 70.5% met the recommended fruit intake (one to two servings), while only 8.2% consumed the appropriate number of vegetables (2.5 to 5.5 servings). Studies show that these findings may be attributed to various determinants of health, such as urbanisation and the adoption of western lifestyles, along with the convenience factor of processed foods for a working population which has led to sedentary behaviours. The increased consumption of processed food products high in sugar, salt, and fats can be attributed to their affordability, convenience, taste, and promotion from heavy marketing in the context of expanded trade and global markets.

Global markets are defined as a system of international trade where goods, services, and capital travel across national borders, allowing companies to operate and compete on a global scale (Latham, 2024). Expanded trade involves the growth of international trade through reduced barriers and trade agreements, which increases the flow of products, including processed foods, between countries. This process often limits local productivity and, ultimately, public health. The heavy marketing of ultra-processed foods and sugary beverages, exacerbated by the expanse of trade and global markets, plays a critical role in shaping poor dietary habits, particularly in vulnerable countries such as those in the South Pacific (Latham, 2024). For example, multinational food corporations use extensive advertising strategies, often tailored to local cultures and youth audiences, to promote cheap, energy-dense products that undermine traditional, nutrient-rich diets. Trade liberalisation has facilitated the influx of these products, making them more accessible and affordable than local alternatives, while simultaneously limiting the ability of governments to implement protective food regulations (Hall, 2013).

In the South Pacific region, this shift in trade has contributed to a growing dependence on imported foods and a decline in local food production, exacerbating the prevalence of diet-related NCDs. For example, financial constraints play a major role, as fresh produce is often more expensive and less accessible in low-income communities where many Pacific families reside. As such, food marketing and global trade continues to pose a significant threat to public health, particularly among Pacific youth. Culturally, shifts from traditional diets to more westernised, processed food patterns have diminished the role of fruit and vegetables in daily meals. Additionally, time pressures, limited nutritional knowledge, and the aggressive marketing of unhealthy foods further exacerbate these patterns.

Effort has been made to address unhealthy eating habits in Aotearoa New Zealand, including a range of public health initiatives aimed at encouraging people to adopt healthy lifestyles for long term health and well-being, such as health promotion aimed at increasing intake of fruits and vegetables (The Fono, 2020; MoH, 2008, 2012). The public health strategy, '*Healthy Eating Healthy Action*' (HEHA), was developed in 2004, along with community-based health initiatives such as Enua Ola (holistic health and well-being – West and North Auckland), Health Village Action Zones (HVAZ – Central Auckland), and Lotu Mou'i (South Auckland), which were specifically

designed to support Pacific peoples in leading healthier lives (Ryan et al., 2019). Findings showed an improvement in health for the duration of the programme initiative in some communities, but long-term sustainable and widespread health changes remain challenging (Mahony & O'Connor, 2011). Further exacerbating these limited efforts and effects, a change in government leadership from Labour to National in June 2012 resulted in the HEHA strategy being deemed inconsistent with National's capitalistic political agenda (Bruce, 2014), leading to significant cuts in public health funding, including the HEHA strategy (Mclean, 2009; Ryan et al., 2019). This caused significant upset among the public health sector, including researchers, primary health care providers, district health boards and the communities they serve. Public health agencies and communities were left to implement community-based health initiatives independently, seek funding themselves, or discontinue them altogether. As a result, NCDs continue to disproportionately affect the most vulnerable populations, particularly Pacific peoples, further exacerbating health inequities. Despite discontinued funding, primary health care organisations and other agencies responsible for health promotion programmes continued to fund these programmes independently. To date, health promotion programmes, including Enua Ola and HVAZ, have continued in line with promoting health and well-being across the region, but their scope and scale is limited.

Despite ongoing efforts to improve health outcomes, the increasing influence of urbanisation, modern lifestyles, and globalisation has undermined their long-term sustainability (Ryan et al., 2019). Structural and socio-ecological determinants, such as the expansion of fast-food chains/outlets, the dominance of food swamps, and the widespread availability and convenience of ultra-processed foods, pose significant barriers to sustainable change long term. Global market forces often overshadow localised health initiatives, creating environments where unhealthy choices are more accessible, heavily marketed, and economically viable, particularly for vulnerable populations. As a result, transformative health interventions require systemic, multi-level approaches that address these deeper, embedded inequities (MoH, 2020; Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment [MBIE], 2024; Ryan et al., 2019). Thus, there is an urgent need to improve food systems for better health outcomes across the population. One potential solution is to create and design innovative new food systems

that can provide a sustainable approach to a) offer healthier food options at an affordable price and b) promote healthier food options within community settings.

1.3. Pacific Youth as Food Entrepreneurs in Auckland Aotearoa New Zealand

1.3.1. Pacific Youth in Auckland

Pacific youth represent a rapidly expanding and influential demographic in Aotearoa New Zealand, particularly within Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. According to the 2023 Census, one in four Aucklanders aged 0 to 24 years (134,754 individuals) identify as Pacific, underscoring their centrality to the city's future social and economic landscape (Stats NZ, 2023). Their contributions extend well beyond population growth. Pacific youth sustain cultural continuity through language, with Samoan and Tongan among the most widely spoken non-English languages in Auckland; and they play visible roles in volunteering, church-based activities, sports, and creative arts that enhance Auckland's civic and cultural fabric (Statistics New Zealand, 2019; Tanielu & Johnson, 2014). Educational progress has also been evident, with 70.4% of Pacific school leavers in Auckland achieving NCEA Level 2 or above in 2023, alongside steady growth in higher education participation (Ministry of Education, 2023).

Despite these contributions, systemic barriers constrain Pacific youths' full potential. Labour force data show that Pacific unemployment stood at 10.8% in May 2025, approximately twice the national average (Stats NZ, 2025). Furthermore, Pacific youth are disproportionately represented among NEETs (not in employment, education, or training), with 14.9% of those aged 15 to 19 years and 25.2% of those aged 20 to 24 years classified in this category (Ministry of Social Development, 2025). Health inequities intensify these challenges: Pacific children experience the country's highest obesity prevalence and are over twice as likely to live in food-insecure households compared to non-Pacific peers (MoH, 2022).

Addressing these disparities requires targeted interventions. Evidence points to the importance of strengthening school-to-work transitions through paid internships, apprenticeships, and entrepreneurship pathways; while expanding culturally grounded health initiatives that address nutrition, physical activity, and well-being (Fa'alili-Fidow et al., 2021). Investment in community institutions—such as churches, youth organisations, and cultural groups—that already anchor Pacific youths' civic

participation is also critical. Such measures would reduce barriers to participation and consolidate Pacific youth as key drivers of Auckland's demographic renewal, cultural vitality, and economic development.

As previously mentioned, the concept of food holds deep cultural, social, and economic significance within Pacific communities, functioning both as nourishment and a medium for connection, identity, and reciprocity (Ikihele et al., 2020; Oliver, 2019). In the context of social enterprise, food, particularly fruit- and vegetable-based initiatives, is a powerful platform for Pacific youth to address health inequities while potentially embodying economic empowerment (Oliver, 2019). By embedding cultural values such as service, community care, and collective well-being into food-based enterprises, these initiatives can create meaningful change that aligns with both social impact and sustainable development (Ikihele et al., 2020; Oliver, 2019). This makes food not just a product, but a culturally diverse platform leveraging for health promotion and entrepreneurship.

1.3.2. Pacific Youth Involvement

As mentioned earlier, youth are key players in current public health movements, such as that of NCD prevalence, in the construct of social youth entrepreneurship initiatives. Qualitative studies conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of youth as leaders in health projects in India (Chandra, & Liang, 2017), Canada, England (McMurtry et al., 2015); and China (Sundaramurthy et al., 2013) reveal an increase in youth productivity and physical activity, improved nutrition related behaviours, reduced stress, and improved cognitive behaviour.

Since the early 2000s, the increasing technological era unfolding in today's society, has positioned youth as critical individuals within contemporary public health responses, particularly in addressing the growing burden of NCDs through social entrepreneurship initiatives. However, while their involvement is often celebrated, there is a tendency to promote youth participation without sufficiently addressing the structural limitations they face, such as lack of resources, policy support, and decision-making power. Framing youth as central to public health innovation must go beyond tokenistic engagement to ensure they are genuinely empowered and supported to influence sustainable change within complex health systems (Ikihele et al., 2020). Youth have the potential to contribute meaningfully to NCD solutions, particularly when their

entrepreneurial skills are harnessed in relation to the development of fruit and vegetable enterprises (Cammock et al., 2019; Chandra, & Liang, 2017; Conn et al., 2020; McMurtry et al., 2015; Sundaramurthy et al., 2013). However, this potential is often underutilised or inadequately supported. Given that youth have the capacity to add value to solutions for NCDs, there is a need for systemic investment in youth-led innovation that is culturally relevant, structurally supported, and grounded in the lived realities of Pacific communities.

To date, there is little research regarding the issues of fruit and vegetable eating, and the nature of Pacific youth enterprise in healthy eating in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. Using a qualitative TPAR Pacific based epistemological framework, this research explores the role of Pacific youth as health entrepreneurs in fruit and vegetable enterprises.

1.4. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The Fonofale framework provides a visual and cultural approach to guide the research process. Developed by Fuimaono Pulotu-Endemann (2001), the Fonofale model of health is a holistic and culturally grounded framework for understanding Pacific health and well-being through the depiction of key elements such as family, culture, spirituality, and interconnectedness. By situating this study within Fonofale, the significance of Pacific epistemologies in shaping the lived experiences of Pacific youth health entrepreneurs is acknowledged. Thus, this theoretical lens ensures that the narratives and perspectives shared by participants are interpreted through a culturally appropriate paradigm that reflects Pacific worldviews.

1.4.1. Methodology

A TPAR methodology was employed, drawing on Pacific, Western, and South American research paradigms (traditions of participatory research arose from social activism and decolonisation in the South American context). PAR, rooted in critical and emancipatory traditions, is inherently collaborative and action-oriented, making it well-suited for research that seeks to empower marginalised voices (Kemmis et al., 2014). This study adapted TPAR through the four action cycles, incorporating Samoan concepts to reflect the relational and dialogical nature of Pacific knowledge-sharing between the student researcher (of Samoan heritage) and participants: (1) Teu le Vā –

Relationship building, (2) Talanoa – Storytelling, (3) Va'ava'ai ma Fa'atino – Act and observe, and (4) Fa'aiuga ma Fa'asoa – Reflect and share. These phases, derived from action research (Conn et al., 2020; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2014) and translated into a Pacific framework, ensured that the research process aligned with Pacific ways of knowing and being. TPAR was of significant value given it brings the voices of Pacific youth to the fore allowing for fair and equitable rigour.

Using PAR alone would not have adequately captured the ethnic-specific voices and experiences of the participants (Vaioleti, 2006). TPAR was highly valuable as it prioritised Pacific voices, ensuring that participants' perspectives were represented with cultural authenticity and depth as discussed later in this exegesis (Anae, 2019; Cammock et al., 2021; Conn et al., 2020; Health Research Council [HRC], 2014; Naepi, 2019; Sa'u Lilo, 2018; Vaioleti, 2009). By centring Pacific epistemologies, this approach provided a rigorous and equitable foundation for capturing the lived experiences of Pacific youth health entrepreneurs.

1.4.2. Talanoa Based Methods

Talanoa-based methods employed in this study included talanoaga (dialogue), talanoa (open conversation), and storytelling, ensuring an iterative process where participants engaged in multiple meetings to refine their ideas (Vaioleti, 2006). Participants visually represented their concepts through mind maps, illustrating the challenges and opportunities associated with fruit and vegetable consumption and their ideas for fruit- and vegetable-based entrepreneurship. For example, collaborative talanoa facilitated the development of a 'mums and bubs' health and wellness initiative, incorporating the co-researchers' insights and experiences. Additionally, digital photographs were taken to document the co-researchers' existing fruit and vegetable enterprises, as well as the process of developing their business ideas into digital formats. This visual documentation provided a meaningful way to capture their entrepreneurial journeys while fostering self-reflection and collective engagement (Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014; Vaioleti, 2006).

I also created vision boards was also created to encapsulate the co-researchers' individual and collective narratives, offering a tangible representation of their aspirations and experiences. This method allowed Pacific youth entrepreneurs, who are often marginalised in mainstream health discourse, to articulate their perspectives in a

visual, and culturally resonant and empowering way. The use of Talanoa and PAR methodologies ensured that the research process was both participatory and reflective of the unique voices of Pacific youth, aligning with their lived experiences and aspirations for improved health and well-being (Fa'avae et al., 2016). These approaches were critical to the research design, as they provided an inclusive and contextually appropriate platform for youth-led innovation in fruit and vegetable promotion.

1.4.3. Researcher Positionality

As a Samoan, born and raised in Aotearoa New Zealand, I was raised the Fa'aSamoa way; raised by the aiga including my beautiful mother with my siblings, cousins, uncles, aunties, and my grandparents to respect, obey and serve through alofa. With these family values in mind, my mother always taught us, that no matter what we set out to do in life, to do so with alofa – through our Heavenly Father and to always remember where we came from. It is from this standpoint that led me to pursue a career that would not only support my own personal journey but the family, my aiga. As noted by Tamasese et al., 1998 - For, as I said at the launch of the O le Taeao Afua report (Tamasese et al. 1998), "I am not an individual; I am an integral part of the cosmos. I share divinity with my ancestors, the land, the seas and the skies. I am not an individual, because I share a "tofi" (an inheritance) with my family, my village and my nation. I belong to my family and my family belongs to me. I belong to my village and my village belongs to me. I belong to my nation and my nation belongs to me. This is the essence of my sense of belonging." Initially my journey as a PhD student researcher in public health began early in life as an advocate for personal health and well-being.

My passion for participating in a variety of sports; namely netball and rugby throughout school years and being active in general was testament to this as I committed to as many sports as possible considering my favourite subject in high school being physical education (P.E). Therefore, I took it upon myself to pursue further education and career in P.E. Fortunately, AUT provided the opportunity to pursue a career in the sport and recreation sector, where I fully immersed myself in the Diploma of Sport and Recreation, graduating after a rewarding year of study. I then progressed to the Bachelor of Sport and Recreation degree, from which my professional and academic career began to take shape. During this time, I completed my BSR placement and later secured employment at AUT's Human Potential Centre, where my career further developed. I contributed to health promotion research related programmes such as Kids

in the Kitchen as a research assistant at the same time I worked as a physical activity instructor progressing to the Enua Ola co-ordinator; an initiative across North Shore communities, as well as international health work in Samoa and the Cook Islands.

I have since worked as a research assistant and officer across a range of public health and Pacific development projects, including in Fiji and Samoa, and completed a Master of Public Health supported by a Pacific Islands Families scholarship. During this period, I had the opportunity to be taught by and meet my PhD primary supervisor, Dr Cath Conn, whose mentorship has continued to nurture and critically challenge my thinking on health and wellbeing, particularly in relation to Pacific peoples. It was through her encouragement and suggestion that I applied for the AUT InterNZ Scholarship, which I was subsequently awarded, which enabled me to travel to New York City and work at Play Rugby USA as a youth empowerment project lead and rugby development mentor. Upon returning in 2014, I worked at AUT as a teaching assistant in nutrition, physical activity, and health, as well as a research assistant at the Human Potential Centre, and later as a research officer on health promotion projects contributing to international development, including initiatives with Fijian youth entrepreneurs in Fiji and in Samoa. I am currently a lecturer in health and wellbeing related papers and continue to contribute to research projects as a member of the Centre for Child, Youth and Health Research at AUT.

Through my practical work experiences and academic journey in sport, public health, and well-being, I developed a deeper understanding of the lifestyle-related diseases affecting society, particularly the significant burden experienced by Pacific peoples. Witnessing the extent of these health inequities highlighted the urgent need for improved health outcomes within Pacific communities. This awareness strengthened my commitment to contributing to positive change by supporting initiatives that raise health awareness, promote healthier lifestyle behaviours, and help prevent the development of non-communicable diseases among Pacific peoples. Over a decade in the sport, public health and well-being industry, as these diseases have continued to bear burden across the lifespan among Pacific peoples, my passion and drive has not changed and remains that I am determined to contribute to finding solutions to end existing chronic diseases. Given these experiences I am better positioned as an insider Pacific student in public health research and practice to serve my purpose for my aiga as well as the outside

researcher role for the community. In this case, the Pacific youth health entrepreneurs, the stakeholders and potentially the wider Pacific community.

1.5. Significance of the Research

The significance of this study, Pacific youth health entrepreneurship in Aotearoa New Zealand using TPAR to support Pacific youth to develop fruit and vegetable enterprises for good health outcomes, lies in its originality at the intersection of Pacific youth development, health entrepreneurship, and food systems transformation. World-wide, NCDs are the public health problem for the 21st century, and the leading cause of morbidity and mortality in Aotearoa New Zealand, disproportionately affecting Pacific peoples (MoH, 2021). These inequities are linked to biological and behavioural risk factors, as well as social determinants of health such as income, food access, and systemic marginalisation (Marmot, 2020; WHO, 2020). Despite national strategies promoting fruit and vegetable consumption, Pacific youth continue to face barriers including affordability, accessibility, and cultural disconnection from traditional food systems (Puloka, 2017; Utter et al., 2018). Addressing these structural challenges requires innovative, community-driven approaches that centre Pacific knowledge systems and youth agency.

This research contributes to filling a critical gap in both health promotion and entrepreneurship scholarship. While international studies increasingly explore youth entrepreneurship as a driver for sustainable livelihoods and social change (Lans et al., 2014; Schøtt et al., 2017), there is limited work examining health entrepreneurship specifically among Pacific youth. Existing Pacific health research often positions youth as recipients of interventions rather than active designers of culturally grounded solutions (Tiatia-Seath et al., 2020). By applying TPAR, this study re-centres Pacific youth as knowledge holders and innovators, challenging Western-centric research paradigms that privilege external expertise (Nabobo-Baba, 2008; Vaioleti, 2006).

From a theoretical perspective, the project advances the literature on Pacific epistemologies by drawing on the Fonofale model of health, which situates well-being holistically across physical, spiritual, family, and cultural dimensions (Pulotu-Endemann, 2009). Embedding entrepreneurship within this framework challenges dominant economic narratives that reduce entrepreneurship to profit maximisation;

instead, highlighting its potential as a vehicle for collective well-being and food sovereignty (Smith, 2022; Smith et al., 2023). Such a reframing aligns with global calls to integrate Indigenous knowledge into health promotion and sustainable development (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], 2021; United Nations, 2015).

Critically, this study interrogates the structural conditions that both enable and constrain Pacific youth entrepreneurship. While youth-led enterprises are often celebrated for their innovation, critics argue that entrepreneurship discourses can obscure systemic inequalities by shifting responsibility for structural health inequities onto individuals (Dey & Steyaert, 2016). In Aotearoa New Zealand, Pacific youth navigate socio-economic precarity, intergenerational obligations, and institutional racism, which influence their entrepreneurial trajectories (Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014). By adopting TPAR, this research both acknowledges these constraints and seeks to co-create tangible pathways that strengthen Pacific youth agency, economic participation, and community health outcomes.

In terms of policy and practice, the study offers evidence for re-imagining health promotion strategies that move beyond deficit-based narratives of Pacific health. It aligns with Aotearoa New Zealand's health reforms, which emphasise equity and partnership with Pacific communities (Te Whatu Ora, 2022), and contributes to regional conversations on food systems transformation in the Pacific (FAO, 2019; Public Health Advisory Committee, 2024). More broadly, the findings will speak to SDGs on health (SDG 3), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), reduced inequalities (SDG 10), and responsible consumption and production (SDG 12). Ultimately, the significance of this research is its potential to generate both theoretical and practical contributions: advancing Pacific scholarship on youth health entrepreneurship; offering a culturally grounded methodological model through TPAR; and producing actionable insights for health equity, food security, and youth development in Aotearoa New Zealand.

1.6. Aim of Research

The aim of this research is to explore how Pacific youth can be supported in their roles as youth who are interested in becoming, or already are, well established entrepreneurs in fruit and vegetable enterprises. The current study was conducted in Auckland as this is the location for the largest Pacific community in Aotearoa New Zealand (Ministry for Pacific Peoples [MPP], 2021). I also acknowledge that this study builds on a similar study conducted in Suva, Fiji that used Talanoa participatory action-based methods (using a Fijian lens) to explore the perspectives of four youth entrepreneurs in the Fijian food industry (Conn et al., 2020). That study highlighted key approaches whereby Pacific youth entrepreneurship could be supported in the Aotearoa New Zealand space.

This current study explored Pacific youth entrepreneurs' experiences of promoting fruit and vegetable eating, and their proposals for future promotion of fruit and vegetable consumption. In participatory qualitative research, the primary research question provides direction, shaping the inquiry to be participatory and responsive to the needs of the community involved (Agee, 2009; Goodwin & Boulton, 2024; Longhurst & Johnston, 2023). However, subsequent questions are crucial in critically unpacking complexities, challenging assumptions, and ensuring that the research process remains iterative, inclusive, and aligned with the evolving perspectives of participants (Denny & Weckesser, 2022). Thus, to achieve the overarching study objective, the central research question guiding this study asks: How might Pacific youth in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand be supported to develop fruit and vegetable enterprises and contribute to the health and wellbeing of Pacific communities?

From this primary question, three key sub-questions were developed:

1) What is the existing current and contextual knowledge about Pacific related NCDs, dietary food patterns, and the food system in Aotearoa New Zealand?
2) What are the perceptions and strategies of Pacific youth in Auckland concerning fruit- and vegetable-based entrepreneurship?
3) How can Talanoa, informed by PAR be utilised to support Pacific youth voices and strategies in fruit and vegetable promotion?

1.7. Exegesis Organisation and Structure

Chapters One and Two serve as an introductory section that sets the stage for this research. These chapters provide a contextual background, exploring insightful historical perspectives on the public health issue of NCDs pertaining to health outcomes among Pacific population in Aotearoa New Zealand. They offer a concise state of what is currently known about NCD prevalence, including key trends, issues, challenges, and developments through critically examining existing data, research findings, policy responses, and community or organisational efforts within the context of Pacific health and well-being. This section helps to situate the current study within the broader academic and practical context, showing what has been done, what gaps remain, and how this body of knowledge responds to such gaps. Moreover, these chapters identify, examine, and challenge existing research gaps and discuss how best to explore and address these areas of need.

Utilising the Fonofale model of health as a critical theoretical lens, Chapter Three examines and explores the role of youth enterprises in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand with specific focus on three areas: (1) the prevalence of NCDs among Pacific youth, (2) youth entrepreneurship in addressing NCDs, and (3) the role of social media and cultural determinants in mitigating NCD related impacts. Chapter Four presents the methodology employed in this study, emphasising the adoption of TPAR as the chosen research approach. This chapter meticulously examines Pacific health models, both past and present, in light on their strengths and weaknesses. Further, it provides a critical analysis of Talanoa, and PAR methodologies, elucidating how these concepts align with research theory and practice. As a Samoan, this chapter is underpinned by my personal experience and transcends its significance in shaping the current study's design.

Chapters Five, Six, and Seven critically examine the voices of the Pacific youth involved in this body of research, with a critical commentary of the research process as well as a discussion of the results of an in-depth analysis and interpretation of the data—in this case, talanoa sessions (both semi-structured interviews and focus groups). These chapters serve as a platform for exploring the implications of the findings and how they align with promoting health and well-being and reducing NCD prevalence.

Finally, Chapter Eight concludes the current study by summarising the key findings, contributions, and implications of exploring Pacific youth health entrepreneurship through the PAR of fruit- and vegetable-based enterprises. It reflects on how Pacific youth, as emerging leaders, can influence healthier food environments and address NCD risk factors through culturally grounded and innovative approaches. Drawing from the voices and experiences of Pacific youth, this chapter highlights how the PAR of their ideas illuminates empowerment, collaboration, and digital engagement to support sustainable health outcomes. It also outlines the theoretical and practical significance of the research; discusses the limitations; and offers recommendations for future research, policy, and community action aimed at promoting food equity and youth leadership in Pacific contexts. The chapter encapsulates the significance of the study's contributions to the field of public health and direction towards potential avenues—individual, family, community, political levels for future research.

Chapter 2

Non-communicable disease epidemic among Pacific peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand

2.1. Pacific Peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand

For more than a century Pacific people have contributed significantly to the political, social, and cultural fabric of Aotearoa New Zealand society (MPP, 2023; Salesa, 2017; Sorensen et al., 2015). Pacific peoples are a diverse population with their origins stemming from as many as 20 Pacific nations in the South Pacific region (Ryan et al., 2019); see Figure 1 map of South Pacific region. Many identify with both ancestral Pacific homelands and contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand values and cultural practices (Salesa, 2017; Sorensen et al., 2015; Tiatia, 2008). As such, the values and belief systems of Pacific ethnic groups are underpinned by cultural and religious contexts with over 90% of Pacific peoples sharing common Polynesian ancestry yet differing values, beliefs, tradition, history, and social structures (Jackson & Minster, 2012; Sorensen et al., 2015; Thomsen et al., 2018; Tiatia, 2008). According to recent findings from the 2023 Tupu Ola Moui Pacific Health Chartbook, 65.1% of Pacific peoples reported being religious, a decrease from 82.5% in 2006 (MoH, 2025). Since the 1990s, approximately 60% of Pacific peoples are Aotearoa New Zealand born, with less migrating from South Pacific Islands including Samoa, Tonga, and Niue.

Figure 1

Map of the South Pacific Region

Source. https://www.britannica.com/place/Pacific-Islands

Collectively, Pacific peoples are the fourth largest ethnic group (8.9%) behind European (67.8%), Māori (17.8%), and Asian (17.3%) ethnic groups in Aotearoa New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 2024). They mostly reside in urban areas (Statistics New Zealand, 2024); refer to Table 1 for distribution of ethnic group by population. Of the total Pacific population, 382,000, Samoans comprise the largest group (48.1%), followed by Tongan (22.1%), Cook Island Māori (21.3%), Niuean (7.9%), Fijian (5.7%), Other Pacific (4.6%), and Tokelauan (2.2%) ethnic groups (MoH, 2025a; MPP, 2021). Of these, the majority of the Pacific population, almost 250,000 (64%), reside in Auckland (Statistics New Zealand, 2025a) – refer to Figure 2 for a map of the Auckland region. Figure 2 illustrates a map of Auckland, situating the geographic and demographic context in which Pacific youth are concentrated. Geographically, nine in ten Pacific people (93.4%) live in the North Island with two-thirds (66.9%) residing within the Auckland region (MPP, 2021) – refer to Table 2. This spatial framing is important as it highlights the intersections between

place, community, and the opportunities or barriers Pacific youth encounter in developing enterprise ideas.

The Pacific population is largely youthful; with a median age of 24.9 years compared to 38.1 years of age of the total Aotearoa New Zealand population (MPP, 2021) – refer to Table 1. Approximately half, 50.1% are aged 25 years or younger compared to 31.4% of the total population, 44% in the 25 to 64-year age range, and 5.9% aged 65 years or over compared to 16.6% of the total Aotearoa New Zealand population (MoH, 2025a).

By the year 2038, the number of Pacific older adults is expected to increase by 400%, compared to 270% increase for older Māori adults (MPP, 2021). Further, it is estimated that by 2038, 10.9% of the total Aotearoa New Zealand population will be of Pacific ethnicity (8.2% in 2005), and by the year 2043 it is projected that Pacific peoples will comprise 11.2% of the total population (MoH, 2025a), making Pacific peoples the fastest growing ethnic group in Aotearoa New Zealand (Ryan et al., 2019) – refer to Figure 3. Therefore, the contributions that Pacific people make to Aotearoa New Zealand's society, economy, and identity is, and will continue to form, an important part of the future of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Table 1

Population Distribution by Ethnicity in Aotearoa New Zealand (2023)

Ethnicity	Estimated Population	% of Total Population
Pacific Peoples	442,632	8.9%
Māori	887,493	17.8%
European/Other	3,383,742	67.8%
Asian	861,576	17.3%
Middle Eastern/Latin American/African	92,760	1.9%
Other	56,133	1.1%
Total NZ Population	5,388,000	100%

Note. Adapted from Statistics New Zealand. 2024. Aotearoa Data Explorer. https://www.stats.govt.nz/tools/aotearoa-data-explorer/ (accessed 22 February 2025)

Figure 2

Map of Auckland

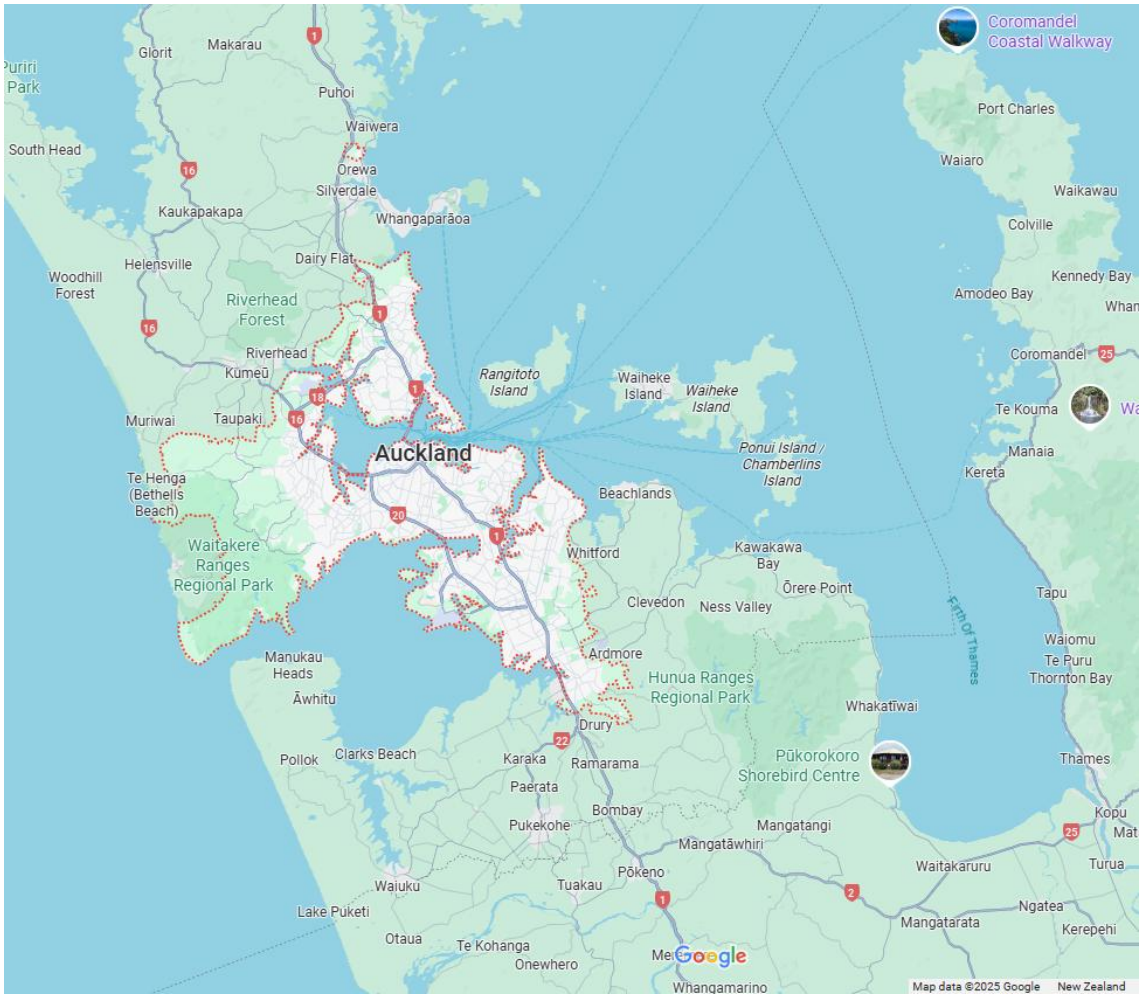


Table 2

Population Distribution of Pacific New Zealanders (2023)

Region / Area	Pacific Population	Percentage of Total Pasifika Population
Auckland	275,079	62.1%
North Island	126,678	28.6%
South Island	40,845	9.2%

Table 3

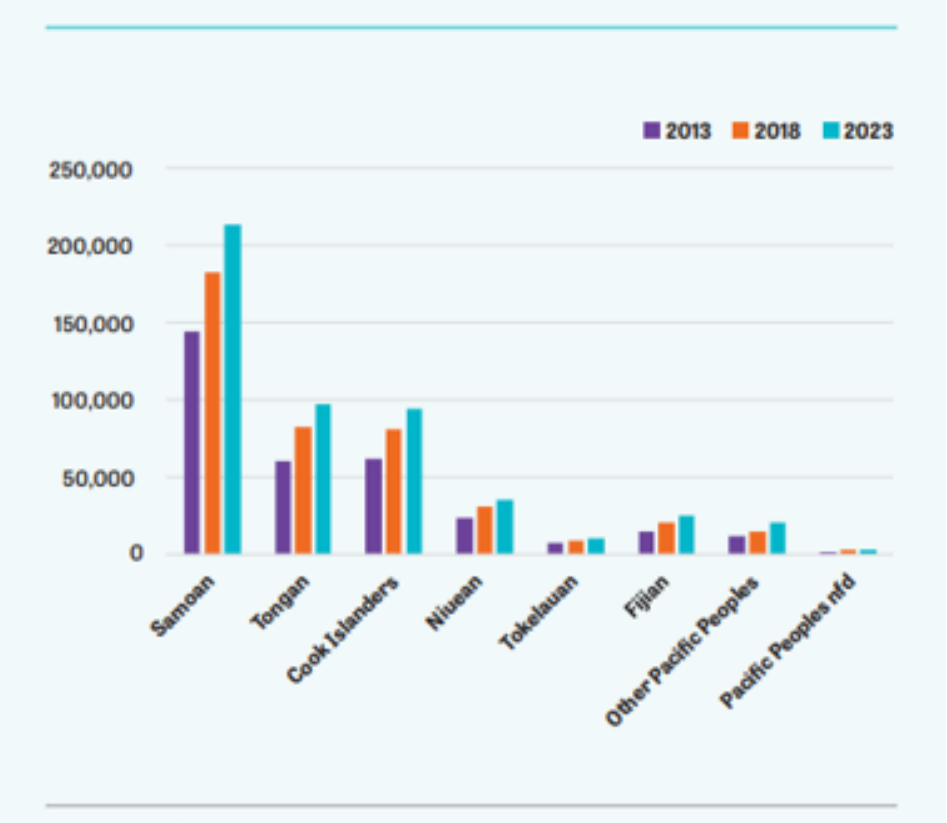
Pacific Population in Aotearoa New Zealand 2023 Census

Ethnic Group	Estimated Population in NZ	% of Pacific Population
Samoan	213,069	48.1%
Tongan	97, 824	22.1%
Cook Islands Māori	94,176	21.3%
Niuean	34,944	7.9%
Fijian	25,038	5.7%
Tokelauan	9,822	2.2%
Tuvaluan	4,500	1%
Kiribati	3,200	0.7%
Ni-Vanuatu	1,000	0.2%
Other Pacific Peoples	20,154	4.6%
Total Pacific Peoples	442,632	100%
Total NZ population	4,993, 921	100%

Note. Adapted from Ministry for Pacific Peoples. (2018). *Pacific peoples in New Zealand*. http://www.mpp.govt.nz/pacific-people-in-nz

Figure 3

Pacific Population Growth from 2013, 2018 and 2023



Note: Adapted from Stats NZ, 2024. Aotearoa Data file.

2.2. NCD Prevalence Among Pacific Peoples

Pacific peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand experience significant inequities and poorer health outcomes compared to their non-Pacific counterparts. The prevalence of obesity among adults varies by ethnicity, 71.3% Pacific, 50.8% Māori, 31.9% European/Other, and 18.5% Asian – refer to Table 4. Obesity is a multifaceted condition with serious social and psychological implications, affecting virtually all age and socioeconomic groups (MoH, 2018; Popkin & Doak, 1998). It is a major contributing factor to the onset of most NCDs, including cerebrovascular disease (CVD), type 2 diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and certain cancers (e.g., kidney, uterine), as well as osteoarthritis, gout, sleep apnea, some reproductive disorders, and gallstones (MoH, 2024). Obesity is typically measured using the body mass index (BMI) scale: overweight (26–30 kg/m^2), obese (30–40 kg/m^2), and morbidly obese (40+ kg/m^2) (MoH, 2024). Currently, obesity rates are highest among Pacific adults (67%) and Māori adults (47%), with intermediate rates observed in European/Other adults (30%), and the lowest rates in Asian adults (15%). This translates to approximately 228,000 Māori adults, 149,000 Pacific adults, 849,000 European/Other adults, and 69,000 Asian adults classified as obese (MoH, 2025).

Table 4

NCD prevalence in Aotearoa New Zealand 2020

NCD Condition	Pacific Peoples (%)	Māori (%)	European/Other (%)	Asian (%)
Obesity	71.3	50.8	31.9	18.5
Type 2 Diabetes	12.5	7	5.4	2.2
Cardiovascular Disease	9.5	7.6	6.4	2.8
Respiratory Conditions	5.1	11.8	4.1	1.2

Note. Extracted from Ministry of Health. (2024a). Annual data explorer 2023/24: New Zealand health survey [Data File]. https://minhealthnz.shinyapps.io/nz-health-survey-2023-24-annual-data-explorer/

These trends and patterns are similar among young children aged under 15 years. The prevalence of obesity among children varies by ethnicity with 35.3% Pacific, 17.8% Māori, 10.3% European/Other, and 6.6% Asian children classified as obese (MoH, 2025). After adjusting for age and sex differences, Pacific children are nearly four times, and Māori children 1.6 times, more likely to be obese compared to non-Pacific and non-Māori children, respectively (MoH, 2025). Approximately one in eight children (aged 2–14 years) (12.7%) were classified as obese, an increase from 9.5% in 2019/20 (MoH, 2025). Prior to 2019, the rate of childhood obesity had remained relatively stable.

Diabetes is one of the three leading causes of death among Pacific people in Aotearoa New Zealand, with an estimated 200,000 individuals diagnosed nationwide (MoH, 2024). It is defined as A chronic metabolic disorder

characterized by insulin resistance and relative insulin deficiency, leading to elevated blood glucose levels. Unlike type 1 diabetes, it typically develops in adulthood but is increasingly seen in younger populations due to lifestyle factors. For example, diabetic neuropathy (nerve damage) diabetic retinopathy (eye disease) diabetic nephropathy (kidney disease) (MOH, 2020). One in 10 Pacific individuals aged 15 years and older has type 2 diabetes, and the prevalence has been rising, particularly among women (MoH, 2024). Type 2 diabetes can manifest during childhood, even as young as 2-years-old (MoH, 2024). Children with diabetes are prone to serious health complications due to their undeveloped organs, and the subtle symptoms can lead to higher rates of undiagnosed cases compared to adults (MoH, 2024). This undiagnosed prevalence is concerning as untreated diabetes poses similar health risks in children as in adults.

Cardiovascular disease is a group of disorders affecting the heart and blood vessels, often caused by a combination of genetic, lifestyle, and environmental factors. This includes conditions that impair circulation, heart function, or both, further developing the risk of diseases including hypertension (high blood pressure), stroke and heart failure. Ischemic heart disease is also known as coronary artery disease, IHD and occurs when the blood supply to the heart muscle is reduced due to atherosclerosis (narrowing of the coronary arteries), leading to chest pain (angina), heart attacks, or heart failure. Further, it is the leading cause of death in New Zealand, responsible for 31% of all mortalities (MoH, 2024). It is prevalent among Aotearoa New Zealand's adult population, with Pacific adult males aged over 65 years at the highest risk of having a stroke, estimated at 12% (MoH, 2016; Murphy & Werring, 2020; Wolfe, 2000). Approximately 25% of the Pacific population suffers from CVD, largely due to poor dietary habits, sedentary lifestyles, and smoking (MoH, 2024). Ischemic heart disease, peripheral vascular disease, and congestive heart failure are prevalent subsets of CVD within the Pacific community (MoH, 2024). The financial burden of treating CVD is substantial, with at least NZ$35 million spent annually on treatment for Pacific adults. CVD-related costs account for 46% of all Pacific inpatient expenses and 65% of outpatient, emergency department, and domiciliary visit costs (MoH, 2024).

It is evident that NCDs, particularly CVD and diabetes, are leading causes of death and significant public health concerns in Aotearoa New Zealand, disproportionately affecting Pacific populations. The high prevalence of obesity exacerbates these conditions, placing urgent emphasis for comprehensive public health strategies to address these chronic diseases. Further, the financial and social burden of NCDs highlights the urgency of implementing effective interventions to reduce the incidence and improve the management of these debilitating conditions.

2.3. NCD Risk Factors Among Pacific Peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand and the Fonofale Model of Health

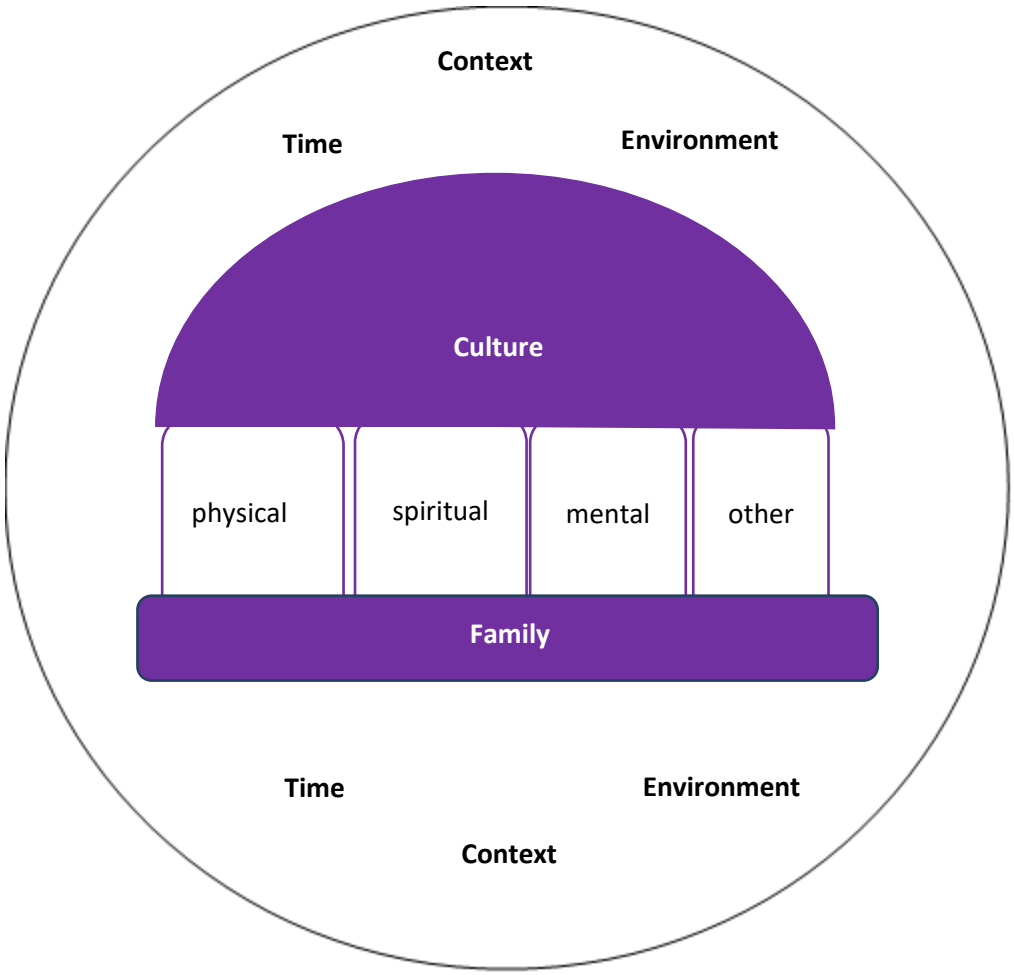
In 1948, the World Health Organization (WHO) defined health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (1948). This holistic perspective emphasizes that health encompasses more than just the absence of illness; it includes the overall well-being of an individual. Good health and well-being align with the WHO's definition, highlighting the importance of maintaining a balance across various aspects of life. The United Nations, Sustainable Development Goal 3 aims to "ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages," underscoring the global commitment to health (United Nations, 2023). Leading a healthy lifestyle involves making choices that promote physical, mental, and social well-being. This includes regular physical activity, balanced nutrition, adequate sleep, stress management, and avoiding harmful behaviours such as smoking. Research indicates that adopting a healthy lifestyle can significantly reduce the risk of chronic diseases and enhance life expectancy. Pacific health is uniquely defined through a Pacific lens, differentiating itself from traditional western biomedical health settings (Naepi, 2015; Pulotu Endemann, 2009). For Pacific peoples, the essence of health is deeply intertwined with faith; belief in our heavenly Father God, family, and culture, as illuminated by the Fonofale framework. In this holistic approach, faith takes precedence, followed closely by the significance of family and the intricate connection to cultural elements (see Figure 4).

In April 1980, originating from his mother's name, 'Fonofale', the Fonofale model was created by Fuimaono Karl Pulotu-Endemann (2009); a Samoan born New Zealand-based academic and nursing professional. The health and well-being model was originally designed to better understand mental health status of Pacific peoples. In recognition that western research methodologies sometimes misrepresent traditional values, culture, and religion as characteristics that define Indigenous populations, and differentiate Pacific from non-Pacific ethnicities (Pulotu-Endemann, 2009; Smith, 1999), the model has since further been developed to inform Pacific health paradigms and conceptualise how Pacific peoples live.

This review uses the Fonofale model to discuss NCD risk factors, in which the key aspects depicted in the model—physical, spiritual, mental, other—are conceptualised as having an interactive relationship with each other (an imbalance of these characteristics correlates with an imbalance in the health status of the individual). Encompassed within the context of time and the environment (including the wider determinants of health), these key aspects comprise the fale.

Figure 4.

Fonofale Model of Health



(adapted from Pulotu Endemann, 2009)

Culture/Roof: The roof represents cultural values and beliefs that comprise a form of shelter and protection of the family. Culture is underpinned by Pacific epidemiological and ontological ways of being and doing. It is dynamic; therefore, constantly evolving and adapting. In Aotearoa New Zealand, culture includes the culture of Aotearoa New Zealand reared Pacific people as well as those Pacific people born and reared in their island homes. In some Pacific families, the culture of the family may comprise a traditional Pacific Island cultural orientation whereby its members live and practice their Pacific Island

cultural identity. Some families may lean towards a Palagi (European) orientation whereby family members practice Palagi values and beliefs. Other families may live their lives somewhere on a continuum that stretches from a traditional Pacific cultural orientation to a Palagi cultural orientation in which traditional beliefs and methods of healing are followed as well as Western methods. Thus, culture plays a significant role in addressing NCDs amongst Pacific peoples.

Family/Foundation: The foundation of the Fonofale represents the family—the foundation of all Pacific cultures. Family can be a nuclear family as well as extended or constituted family. Between the roof and the foundation are the four pou or posts, each representing a state of holistic well-being. These pou connect the culture and family and are continuous and interactive with each other. The family plays a key role in addressing NCDs amongst Pacific peoples.

Pou: These are spiritual, physical, mental, and other.

Spiritual – this dimension relates to the sense of well-being which stems from a belief system that includes either Christian or traditional spirituality relating to nature, spirits, language, beliefs, ancestors, and history; or a combination of both.

Physical – this dimension relates to biological or physical well-being. It is the relationship of the body (which comprises anatomy and physiology) with physical or organic and inorganic substances such as food, water, air, and medications that can have either a positive or negative impact on the physical well-being.

Mental – this dimension relates to the well-being or health of the mind and involves thinking and emotions as well as the behaviours expressed.

Other – This dimension relates to variables that can directly or indirectly affect health such as, but not limited to, gender, sexuality/sexual orientation, age, and socioeconomic status. These all play a key role in addressing NCDs amongst Pacific peoples (Pulotu-Endemann, 2009).

The health and well-being among Pacific peoples reveal that their cherished way of being is intricately tied to unique factors, as highlighted by the Fonofale framework. The emphasis placed on family, God, culture, and Pacific ethnic specificity suggests a strong advocacy among Pacific peoples for defining their well-being within this context. This perspective aligns with current Pacific-based research involving Pacific peoples. Importantly, the diversity within the Pacific community, comprising 40 culturally specific ethnicities (MoH, 2025) challenges the idea of a one-size-fits-all approach, emphasising the need for tailored interventions that respect and address the unique characteristics of each Pacific ethnic group. These themes and the Fonofale lens are further examined and explored specifically pertaining to Pacific youth, and fruit- and vegetable-based space throughout this exegesis.

2.4. Aotearoa New Zealand Food System, Response, and NCDs

NCDs are associated with lifestyle factors, including diet or an individual's eating regime, which is, in turn, influenced by socio-economic factors, such as culture and food systems. The food system in Aotearoa New Zealand has undergone a profound transformation, from its beginnings dating back to the 1860s with Māori settlement to the modern consumer model dominated by ultra-processed foods. The current food system in Aotearoa New Zealand, characterised by the availability of cheap, ultra-processed, high-sugar, -fat, and -sodium foods, is a major contributing factor to the NCD epidemic among Pacific peoples. However, when Māori first settled in Aotearoa New Zealand, they adapted their agricultural practices to the unique climate and environment. Crops such as kūmara and taro were cultivated, complemented by native plants, wild fruits, and a reliance on hunting and fishing. Māori food systems were deeply embedded in whenua (land), tikanga (customs), and whanaungatanga (relationships), ensuring that food was not simply for survival but also carried cultural, spiritual, and communal significance. Land was central to identity, and natural plantations and kai moana (seafood) provided balanced nutrition while reinforcing reciprocal relationships with the environment (Public Health Advisory Committee, 2024).

With colonisation came a shift toward European agricultural practices and land alienation which disrupted Māori food sovereignty and reduced access to traditional food sources (Ikeheke et al., 2020). By the 20th century, large-scale farming, dairying, and sheep industries had become the dominant economic drivers in Aotearoa New Zealand, positioning the country as a leading exporter of meat and dairy products (Brooking & Pawson, 2011). While these industries underpinned national economic prosperity, they also entrenched inequities in food access, disproportionately affecting Māori communities and, later, Pacific migrants who were drawn into urban centres as part of the labour force (Came et al., 2019; Tanielu & Johnson, 2014). The industrialisation of food production and distribution facilitated the rise of supermarket chains and established a commodified food system shaped around efficiency and profit rather than equitable access to healthy kai (Hutchings & Smith, 2020).

In 2025, the New Zealand food system functions as a consumer-driven market where profitability takes precedence over health outcomes. Major corporations, particularly Foodstuffs and Woolworths New Zealand (formerly Progressive Enterprises), dominate food retail and significantly influence accessibility and affordability (Ward et al., 2018). Fresh fruit and vegetables—central to good health—remain priced at a premium, exacerbating food insecurity for vulnerable populations (Rush et al., 2025). Since 2011, and even more so post COVID-19, the cost of fresh fruits and vegetables has significantly increased placing further strain on the ability of low-income families to access nutritious foods (Statistics New Zealand, 2022). In more recent years, fruit and vegetable prices played a significant role in increasing overall food costs in February 2022. Annual food prices increased by 6.8% compared to February 2021, marking the largest rise since July 2011 when prices increased by 7.9% (Statistics New Zealand, 2022). Among the various food categories, fruit and vegetable prices saw the highest surge, rising by 17%, primarily driven by higher prices for tomatoes, broccoli, and iceberg lettuce. Grocery food prices followed, increasing by 5.4%; while restaurant meals and ready-to-eat food prices rose by 5.2%. Meat, poultry, and fish prices also increased by 7.1%, and non-alcoholic beverage prices increased by 2.3%. In relation to Pacific peoples, they are often overrepresented in lower-income groups and face financial

barriers to purchasing healthier food options, which further perpetuates unhealthy dietary patterns (MoH, 2024; Sorenson et al., 2015). These systemic inequalities in the food system have created an environment where it is challenging for Pacific peoples to meet dietary recommendations that could reduce the risk of NCDs.

By contrast, ultra-processed foods high in fat, sugar, and salt, dominate supermarkets and fast-food outlets, supported by intensive marketing strategies that often target children and youth (Swinburn et al., 2019). Structural factors influencing the current food system, such as food availability, affordability, and marketing, heavily influence dietary choices and play a central role in the high rates of NCDs among Pacific peoples (MoH, 2022). Supermarkets and food outlets in low-socioeconomic areas, where many Pacific families reside, often offer a limited selection of affordable healthy foods, while promoting energy-dense, nutrient-poor processed foods (Conn et al., 2020). This trend has been termed food swamps (Cammock et al., 2020). The accessibility of cheap, high-calorie fast foods and sugary beverages contributes significantly to poor nutrition, creating significant food related barriers for Pacific communities to adopt healthier dietary choices and overall, healthy eating regimes (Jones et al., 2019; Roy & Mackay, 2023; Waterlander et al., 2018).

This trajectory reflects a food environment where benefits accrue to top-level corporate actors while health and social costs are externalised onto families and communities (Swinburn & Wood, 2013). Reversing these trends necessitates systemic change, with a reorientation toward a well-being-centred food system that prioritises equity and access to nutritious kai while maintaining economic viability (FAO, 2020). Crucially, this process must be underpinned by Te Tiriti o Waitangi, recognising Māori tino rangatiratanga (self-determination) in food governance and restoring mana to Indigenous food practices (Hutchings & Smith, 2020; Smith, 2012).

Unlike other areas of public health, such as tobacco, food and nutrition are a much more complex and contested area (Swinburn 2011, 2015). In Aotearoa New Zealand Pacific peoples' attitudes towards consuming fruits and vegetables has seen a shift from eating these foods as part of their traditional

diet on an everyday basis to seeing this food as fiapalagi or fiapoko way of eating. Hardin's (2015) longitudinal study looked at behavioural factors related to dietary intake in the Samoan population. Findings showed that both men and women aged from the general population avoided fruits and vegetables. This behaviour stems from the notion that incorporating more fruit and vegetables in the normal routine of eating or the way that these are incorporated are diluting the customary and Samoan cultural way of eating (Hardin, 2015). Therefore, irrespective of culture and traditional customary beliefs, changing eating behaviours is currently a contested area of concern. There is a need for change with a focus on key Pacific youth, such as churches and other Pacific leaders, using health promotion initiatives to advocate for good nutritional dietary choices such as having no salt or sugar at church gatherings.

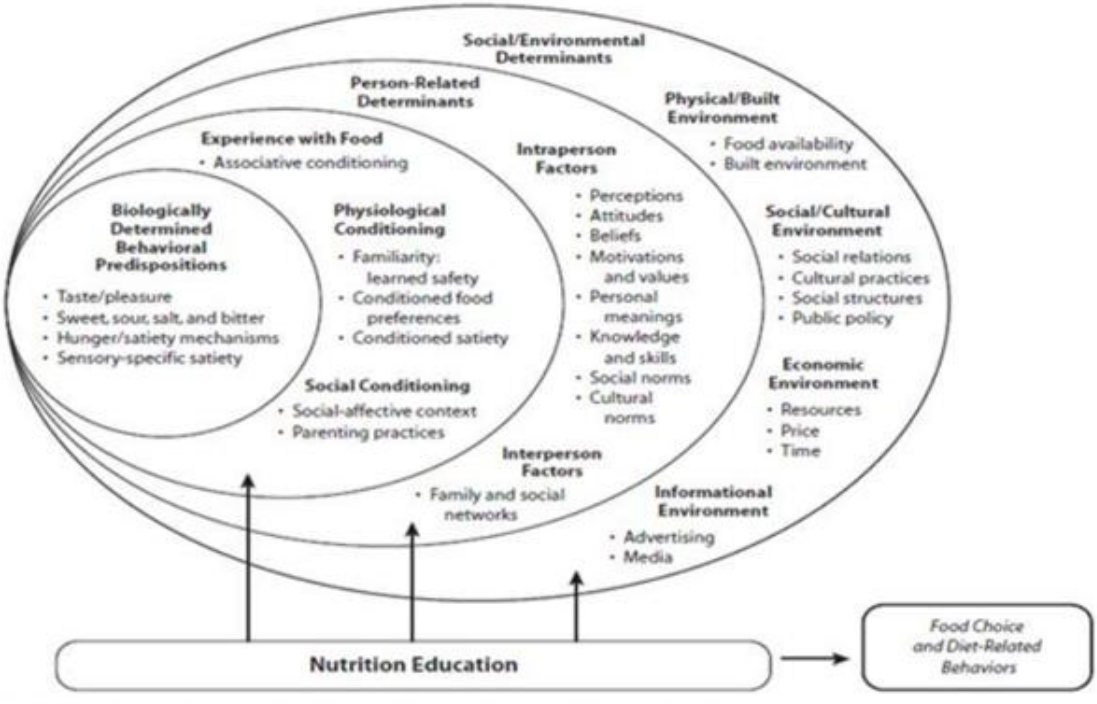
While cultural preferences play a role in food consumption patterns among Pacific peoples, these are increasingly being shaped by the availability and marketing of unhealthy, Westernized foods (Swinburn, 2011; 2015). Traditional Pacific diets, which were once high in fibre and low in processed foods, have been replaced by diets rich in processed meats, refined grains, and sugary drinks (Bailey et al., 2010). This shift towards unhealthy eating patterns has led to a 'nutrition transition' that disproportionately affects Pacific communities. Furthermore, socio-economic factors such as unemployment, overcrowded housing, and limited access to health services further compound the impact of NCDs (MPP, 2021). Pacific families are having to balance living the Western and Pacific specific lifestyle which can lead to financial stress thus increasing the likelihood of reliance on cheap, unhealthy food; in turn, increasing the risk of NCDs and associated healthcare costs. Poor health outcomes lead to further socio-economic disadvantage.

Emerging scholarship suggests that youth may serve as pivotal actors in driving this dominant shift. Pacific youth health food-based enterprises have the potential to advance innovative approaches to food provision that embed cultural values, sustainability, and well-being at their core (Fa'alili-Fidow et al., 2021). The Fonofale model of health, with its emphasis on family, culture,

spirituality, and environment as interconnected determinants of well-being, provides a useful philosophical and practical lens to guide this reimagining (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001). Embedding such frameworks into food policy and enterprise offers a pathway for Aotearoa New Zealand to transform its food system into one that nourishes communities, reduces inequities, and safeguards future generations from diet-related diseases, an area that, to date, remains underexplored.

Figure 5

Factors influencing food choice and dietary behaviours.



Note: This Figure 5 includes a social determinant of eating behaviour model, which highlights the broader social and environmental factors influencing eating habits related to NCDs.

2.4.1. NCD Response

To effectively address the impact of NCDs on Pacific peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand, a multifaceted approach that considers both the food system and the socio-economic determinant of health is essential. Policy interventions that aim to make healthy foods more affordable and accessible in low-income communities are critical. These could include subsidies for fresh produce, taxes on sugary beverages, and regulations on the marketing of unhealthy foods, particularly to children. Additionally, culturally appropriate health promotion initiatives that empower Pacific communities to make healthier food choices are necessary. These initiatives should involve Pacific leaders (e.g., Faifeau's, community leaders, policy makers, researchers) and incorporate traditional foods and cooking methods that are aligned with healthier dietary patterns. Education campaigns that target both the general population and Pacific communities specifically could help raise awareness of the links between diet, NCDs, and long-term health outcomes (MoH, 2025a; MPP, 2024).

The healthcare system must also be better equipped to address the specific needs of Pacific peoples. This includes increasing the availability of preventive health services, such as regular screening for NCD risk factors, and ensuring that these services are culturally tailored and easily accessible to Pacific communities. The high burden of NCDs among Pacific peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand is a direct consequence of the correlation between socio-economic inequalities and an unhealthy food system. The widespread availability of cheap, processed foods, combined with cultural and financial barriers to healthy eating, promotes the prolonged impacts of an NCD epidemic, especially among the most vulnerable including Pacific communities (MoH, 2024; Sorenson, 2019). To reverse this trend, the implementation of comprehensive food system reforms, alongside targeted health promotion efforts and improved healthcare access, is vital. Only by addressing both the structural and behavioural determinants of health is there the possibility to reduce the disproportionate impact of NCDs on Pacific peoples and improve their long-term health outcomes.

To mitigate the healthcare system burden caused by NCDs, Aotearoa New Zealand must shift its focus toward prevention and early intervention. A greater investment in primary healthcare, health promotion, and public health initiatives targeting risk factors such as poor nutrition, physical inactivity, smoking, and excessive alcohol consumption is essential. Culturally tailored programmes for Pacific and Māori communities are especially needed to promote healthier lifestyles and reduce the risk of developing NCDs. By focusing on prevention, the healthcare system could reduce the overall demand for expensive, long-term care associated with chronic diseases (Ola Manuia, 2025).

For example, initiatives such as community-based health promotion programmes that encourage healthy eating, physical activity, and regular health check-ups can help reduce the incidence of NCDs (Sorenson, 2015). Additionally, the use of mobile health services or telemedicine could improve access to healthcare for Pacific peoples who face geographic or financial barriers to seeking timely medical care (Sa'uLilo, 2016). Investing in these preventative measures would help alleviate the burden on the healthcare system and improve the quality of life for Pacific and other at-risk populations (MoH, 2025b).

The growing prevalence of NCDs among Pacific peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand presents a significant challenge to the healthcare system. The financial costs, strain on healthcare infrastructure, and workforce shortages all contribute to the growing burden; while the systemic inequities faced by Pacific communities exacerbate these issues. The healthcare system must move beyond a reactive model and invest in preventive health strategies, with a particular focus on culturally appropriate interventions for Pacific populations. Only by addressing the underlying social and economic determinants of health can the country effectively reduce the burden of NCDs on the healthcare system and improve health equity (MoH, 2023, 2025b).

Aotearoa New Zealand has taken a proactive stance in developing strategies aimed at prevention, early detection, and management of NCDs, and has implemented a multifaceted and comprehensive health response. According to

the Aotearoa New Zealand MoH (2023) report, cardiovascular diseases, cancers, chronic respiratory diseases, and diabetes are among the primary targets of these efforts, aligning with global priorities (UN, 2023; WHO, 2023).

A key aspect of the health response in Aotearoa New Zealand involves a focus on health equity, acknowledging that certain populations may face higher risks and disparities in access to healthcare. Aotearoa New Zealand is one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world with respect to Indigenous populations, and accommodating these populations is key priority. Collaborative efforts are being implemented to ensure that preventive measures, screening, and treatment programmes are accessible and responsive to the needs of diverse communities (MoH, 2023). The government has been active in promoting healthy lifestyle behaviours and has designed and implemented initiatives to address risk factors such as tobacco use, physical inactivity, and unhealthy diets.

Since the 1960s there has been a concerted effort to address the rising burden of NCDs through the implementation of comprehensive health policies (Auckland District Health Board, 2013; Counties Manukau District Health Board, 2013; MoH, 2003, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2016, 2024; Tukuitonga, 2013). These policies focus on prevention, early detection, and management of conditions such as cardiovascular diseases and diabetes, specifically type 2 diabetes. Recognising the unique health needs and disparities within the Pacific community, there has been specific emphasis on tailoring health policies to improve health outcomes among Pacific peoples by addressing cultural, social, and economic determinants of health. However, limited resources for health promotion, the lack of intersectoral ways of working, and the need for new approaches to addressing a difficult problem has meant that these initiatives have had limited effect.

The health system in Aotearoa New Zealand faces challenges which include issues such as workforce shortages, limited resources, and the need for improved coordination between primary care and specialised services (MoH, 2023). Yet, there are notable strengths, including a strong focus on primary healthcare, a commitment to equity, and an emphasis on community

engagement. The health system's resilience and adaptability are evident in its response to challenges, demonstrating a capacity for continuous improvement (MoH, 2023).

It can be argued that the current biomedical health system acts as a band aid, addressing immediate health concerns and chronic diseases. This perspective contends that the effectiveness of the health system is contingent on governmental policies that guide its processes (MoH, 2024). To progress in making substantial, effective, and sustainable change, it is crucial for policymakers to continually evaluate and adjust these policies. By doing so, the health system can evolve towards a proactive approach, preventing health issues before they become chronic and fostering a healthier population overall.

2.4.2. Policies and Programmes

The response to NCDs in Aotearoa New Zealand reflects a complex interplay between structural health reforms, national strategies, research initiatives, and advocacy on food and lifestyle environments. While these strategies demonstrate commendable intent and progressive re-structuring, they raise critical questions about effectiveness, equity, and translation into tangible outcomes for populations most affected by NCDs, particularly Pacific peoples.

A primary strength lies in the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Act 2022, which established Te Whatu Ora, Te Aka Whai Ora, and the Public Health Agency. This restructuring was designed to embed equity and Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations within health governance. From a critical perspective, however, structural reform does not inherently resolve entrenched inequities in NCD burden. Historical evidence suggests that successive health reforms in Aotearoa—whether centralisation or decentralisation—have often failed to produce substantive shifts in health outcomes for Indigenous and Pacific peoples. Unless resourcing, decision-making, and power are genuinely devolved to communities, these reforms risk reproducing bureaucratic layers rather than catalysing equitable health transformation.

Similarly, the Aotearoa New Zealand Health Strategy promotes prevention and community co-design, aligning with international best practice. Yet the

translation from policy to practice remains limited. Critical health policy scholars argue that health strategies in Aotearoa New Zealand often embody aspirational rhetoric but lack binding regulatory mechanisms, robust monitoring, or enforceable targets. For example, while prevention is emphasised, the health system remains structurally weighted towards treatment. This imbalance undermines proactive NCD reduction, particularly in areas like obesity and diabetes where social determinants play a dominant role (Public Health Advisory Committee, 2024).

The Healthier Lives National Science Challenge and Ageing Well initiative represents significant research investment, with a welcome focus on equity and culturally centred approaches. Nevertheless, critiques highlight that knowledge production alone does not guarantee policy adoption or system change. Co-design and participatory research methodologies can be tokenistic if community voices are not coupled with systemic redistribution of resources. The risk is that such initiatives become islands of innovation without broader structural uptake—an outcome frequently observed in Aotearoa's health research landscape.

The Public Health Surveillance Strategy (2025–2030) and updated guidelines on NCD cluster investigations demonstrate technical advances in monitoring and response. Yet a critical lens questions whether surveillance, while necessary, adequately addresses upstream drivers such as poverty, housing insecurity, and food environments. Surveillance without structural intervention risks medicalising NCDs as individual pathologies, rather than situating them within socio-political determinants of health. Perhaps the most striking critique arises in the area of food environment policy. Health Coalition Aotearoa and academic reviews (2023) point to minimal government progress in regulating unhealthy food marketing, implementing fiscal measures like a sugary drinks levy, or mandating transparent nutrition labelling. Despite overwhelming evidence linking obesogenic environments to poor health outcomes, particularly among Māori, Pacific, and low-income groups, the political economy of food regulation remains shaped by industry influence and neoliberal reluctance to regulate. This gap underscores the disjuncture between

evidence and political will—a recurring theme in Aotearoa New Zealand's NCD response (Public Health Advisory Committee, 2024).

Aotearoa New Zealand's strategies against NCDs embody ambitious reform, culturally responsive research, and growing advocacy. Yet, critically, they remain constrained by systemic inertia, political economy barriers, and a tendency towards aspirational discourse over enforceable action. The persistence of stark inequities in obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease among the Aotearoa New Zealand population, including Māori and Pacific communities, highlights the limits of current approaches. A transformative NCD response requires more than structural reform or research innovation; it demands binding regulatory action on food environments, redistribution of resources to Indigenous and Pacific governance structures, and systemic accountability to equity outcomes. Without this, NCD strategies risk perpetuating the very inequities they aim to dismantle.

Public health campaigns and education programmes play a crucial role in raising awareness and promoting healthier living choices. A focus on building community resilience and empowerment, particularly in areas where socio-economic factors may contribute to higher NCD prevalence, offers a commitment to early detection and management. Screening programmes and healthcare services are designed to identify NCDs at an early stage, allowing for more effective intervention and management. Palliative care is also incorporated into the continuum of care to enhance the quality of life for those affected by chronic conditions (MoH, 2023, 2025b).

As part of its ongoing commitment to combating NCDs, Aotearoa New Zealand continues to adapt its strategies based on emerging evidence and best practices. The health response reflects a holistic and person-centred approach, recognising the importance of both treating NCDs and addressing the broader determinants of health (MoH, 2023; MPP, 2023). The government's commitment to collaboration, health promotion, and equitable access to healthcare underpins Aotearoa New Zealand's dedication to mitigating the impact of NCDs on the total population and fostering a healthier future.

NCDs are lifestyle diseases that are preventable through regular physical activity, eating healthily, reducing stress levels, smoking cessation, and limited alcohol intake (MoH, 2025). However, historically medical doctors have been assigned the role to cure and manage NCDs through medication rather than lifestyle preventative measures. Traditional biomedical systems have encouraged clinical doctors and registered dietitians to work together to address the health issue but with limited success.

Newer measures, such as the establishment of health coaches, have sought to alleviate the pressures placed on medical doctors. This lifestyle medicine approach began in Aotearoa New Zealand in 2015; thus, it is relatively new to the public health model of care. A qualitative study exploring the impacts of lifestyle medicine showed that people were positive although key challenges existed exacerbating the strain of the initiative (Zinn et al., 2024). These include a lack of political will at local, regional, and governmental levels to fully integrate this approach into the health care system. Nonetheless, as a new area of public health research, it can help the total population of Aotearoa New Zealand including those of Pacific peoples. Further studies and work into applying lifestyle medicine in clinical and public health care settings is urgently required.

2.5. Future Research and NCDs Amongst Pacific Peoples: Where to From Here?

Based on the public health policies discussed above, the significant NCDs health burden among Pacific peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand requires further research and urgent public health action. To comprehensively address these issues and improve health outcomes, future research must continue to adopt multidisciplinary, culturally informed, and community-based approaches. Several key areas require attention to fill knowledge gaps and develop strategies that align with the unique needs of Pacific communities.

2.5.1. NCD Culturally Informed Prevention Approaches

In health care policy, practice, and system designs, there is growing recognition of the importance of culturally tailored interventions in improving health

outcomes (MoH, 2020, 2023). However, much of the research on NCD prevention and management in Aotearoa New Zealand lacks deep integration with determinants of health models such as Fonofale, or intersectoral and systems wide initiatives (Donkin et al., 2017; Pulotu Endemann, 2009; Sa'u Lilo, 2016). Future research must prioritise the exploration of how Pacific health models can be embedded into NCD-related public health strategies. By evaluating the effectiveness of culturally grounded programmes, researchers can provide evidence for developing tailored interventions that resonate more deeply with Pacific peoples. Additionally, understanding the role of traditional Pacific knowledge and practices in health promotion could lead to more culturally relevant preventive strategies.

2.5.2. Pacific Youth and Entrepreneurship in Health and Nutrition

Pacific youth have the potential to drive and facilitate positive change in their communities, particularly in health promotion (Auva'a-Alatimu et al., 2025a; Auva'a-Alatimu et al., 2025b; Firestone et al., 2021, Mahony & O'Connor, 2011 ; Martin et al., 2023, Xu et al., 2020; Veukiso-Ulugia et al., 2025) and food-based enterprise (Cammock et al., 2020; Conn et al., 2020). Future research should explore the role of Pacific youth in food and health entrepreneurship, particularly focusing on how they can promote healthier lifestyles through innovative solutions. Given the high prevalence rates of NCDs and the health inequities across the Pacific population in Aotearoa New Zealand, understanding how young Pacific entrepreneurs can influence food systems by promoting access to healthier, affordable options is crucial. Additionally, future research should investigate the barriers that Pacific youth face in establishing and sustaining health-related businesses, particularly in relation to systemic issues such as socioeconomic inequality and limited access to resources for good health outcomes.

2.5.3. Food Systems and NCDs in Pacific Communities

Future research should further explore the relationship between the modern food system and NCDs among Pacific peoples. Pacific communities often face challenges in accessing affordable, healthy food options due to socioeconomic disparities, food deserts, and the influence of globalised, processed food

markets. Research is needed to explore how structural inequalities within the food system exacerbate poor nutrition and contribute to the prevalence of NCDs. Understanding how policy changes in food distribution, pricing, and access can be used to improve Pacific peoples' health is critical for developing long-term, sustainable solutions.

While there is existing research on the social determinants of health among Pacific peoples, more longitudinal studies are needed to assess the long-term impact of factors such as education, employment, housing, and income inequality on NCD development. These studies could offer valuable insights into how social determinants shape health behaviours over time and help identify the most effective intervention points for public health policies. Additionally, longitudinal data can help illuminate the multigenerational impact of socioeconomic disadvantage and inform targeted approaches to breaking the cycle of poor health outcomes in Pacific communities.

2.5.4. Collaborative and Community-led Research Approaches

The future of NCD research must embrace participatory and community-led approaches to ensure that the voices of Pacific peoples are at the centre of health research. Pacific researchers, in collaboration with community leaders and health professionals, should consider a leadership role in designing studies that address the unique cultural and social contexts of Pacific peoples. Co-design methodologies that involve community members can lead to more meaningful and actionable outcomes. Future research should also focus on fostering partnerships between academic institutions, Pacific organisations, and all government agencies to ensure that research efforts are coordinated and aligned with community priorities.

Finally, there is a critical need for ongoing evaluation of existing health interventions and policies aimed at reducing NCD prevalence among Pacific peoples. Research should assess the outcomes of government initiatives, public health campaigns, and community programmes targeting NCDs. Additionally, policy analysis is needed to explore broader systemic factors that influence health outcomes, such as healthcare access and equity. By evaluating what has worked and what has not, researchers can provide evidence-based

recommendations for refining future policies and interventions to better serve Pacific communities.

2.6. Conclusion

Pacific peoples are considered one of the fastest growing populations in Aotearoa New Zealand, making them a key health priority. For decades, poor health has been a major concern for the MoH in Aotearoa New Zealand. Since the emergence of NCDs in the 1960s, and subsequent impact on the population, various policies have been implemented by the Manatu Hauora MoH to address NCD prevalence. However, the first dedicated Pacific health policy Ola Manuia aimed at improving health outcomes, including reducing NCDs, was only recently introduced in 2021. This delay is long overdue, especially considering that Pacific peoples continue to experience significantly higher rates of NCDs compared to non-Pacific groups.

Despite clinical, societal, environmental, and political efforts to prevent and manage NCD prevalence, the prevalence of NCDs has continued to rise, placing a heavy burden on Aotearoa New Zealand, including Pacific communities. There is urgent need for research addressing collaborative, culturally tailored approaches to reduce the burden of NCDs and promote healthier futures for Pacific communities. More importantly, greater recognition of this pressing health issue is necessary to ensure effective prevention and reduction strategies are implemented, enabling Pacific peoples to lead healthier and more sustainable lives in the long term. It is for these reasons the current research is significant and seeks to contribute towards the fight against NCDs and empowering Pacific communities for improved health equality and equity.

This chapter provided a comprehensive review of the current health policies and practices in Aotearoa New Zealand that surrounded the NCD public health problem. Chapter Three focuses on critiquing existing literature pertaining to the role of Pacific youth as critical pioneers in the fight against NCDs, and empowering Pacific communities to promote Pacific voice in preventing NCDs and promoting good overall health outcomes.

Chapter 3

Pacific Youth Entrepreneurship in Health: A critical scoping review

3.1. Introduction

It is well documented that youth world-wide play a pivotal role in the vitality of society, contributing innovative thinking, inspiring others, and displaying an inherent ability to serve (Conn et al., 2020; Hershberg et al., 2015; Lee, 2019; United Nations, 2018). Pacific youth in Aotearoa New Zealand are no exception; they are reshaping traditional Pacific practices in an inspiring manner, showcasing resilience and dedication to serving their communities (Cammock et al., 2020; Conn et al., 2016; MoH, 2008).

However, Pacific youth often experience negative stereotypes, adding environmental pressures to maintain holistic well-being encompassing spiritual, emotional, and physical health (Fa'alili-Fidow et al., 2018; MoH, 2008; Tiatia, 1998). Despite these challenges, opportunities exist for Pacific youth in the health sector. A growing number of young individuals of Pacific descent are establishing health-focused ideas, including business-based concepts/businesses, serving as inspirational leaders promoting traditional Pacific cuisine within modern society (Cammock et al., 2021; Chia et al., 2022). Through online platforms such as Youtube, and social media such as Facebook and online blogging, they share their narratives of embracing nutritious food and beverages (Dunn et al., 2023).

Their entrepreneurial pursuits, however, are not without obstacles. For instance, COVID-19 saw a decline in business confidence and trading activity (Dunn et al., 2023). This challenge significantly impacted health-focused businesses, particularly those centred around fruit- and vegetable-based products, resulting in short and long-term closures, and raising concerns about the popularity, economic viability, and sustainability of healthy eating options (Dunn et al., 2023). This event may have contributed to people favouring less healthy alternatives such as fast-food chains/food swamps causing economic strain on businesses, councils, and the environment. Further, the cost of

obtaining and leasing spaces for these ventures contributes to the economic challenge, necessitating interventions and policy changes from local councils to support and ensure the sustainability of these health-focused enterprises.

3.1.1. Literature Review Aims and Objectives

The aim of this literature review is to critically analyse a wide range of existing literature on Pacific youth food entrepreneurship in Aotearoa New Zealand. A critical scoping review involves an evaluative analysis of the literature to assess the strengths, weaknesses, gaps, and contributions of a wide range of existing studies (Rocco et al., 2008).

3.1.2. Literature Search Strategy

Literature was identified and retrieved from the following online databases: PubMed, AUT Google Scholar, and EBSCOhost; as well as Aotearoa New Zealand government agency websites including the Manatu Hauora MoH Aotearoa New Zealand, Ministry of Pacific Peoples, Ministry of Business and Innovation; and international government websites including the United Nations, the World Bank and the WHO.

The following search terms were used: Pacific peoples, youth, health, wellbeing, nutrition, entrepreneurship, fruit, vegetables, socioeconomic status, health outcomes, poor health outcomes, culture, socioeconomic status, enterprise, social enterprise, food systems, climate change, sustainability, non-communicable disease, and obesity, Pacific youth entrepreneurship, Fonofale framework, cultural identity, health disparities, family influence/aiga, barriers to entrepreneurship, spirituality, socio-economic factors, support networks, cultural health initiatives. The search included 55 key sources published from 1980 to 2025.

3.2. Pacific Youth Entrepreneurship

Youth entrepreneurship is characterised by innovation, adaptability, and resilience, often driven by the desire for autonomy and creative expression (Holt, 2024; Lim & Chia, 2016; Lubberink, 2020; Macassa et al., 2020). Among young entrepreneurs, motivations frequently include the pursuit of financial independence, the opportunity to address community needs, and the

chance to challenge traditional career trajectories. For Pacific youth, entrepreneurship can also represent a means of contributing to family and community well-being, aligning with cultural values of reciprocity and collective success (Holt, 2024; Ikihele et al., 2020). Despite its potential, youth entrepreneurship is not without challenges. Young entrepreneurs commonly face limited access to funding, inadequate mentorship, and a lack of business experience. For Pacific youth, additional systemic barriers, such as racial bias and cultural marginalisation, can further complicate their entrepreneurial journeys (Tuatagaloa, 2017). Nonetheless, Pacific youth display remarkable resilience, often leveraging cultural knowledge and networks to navigate these challenges (Ikihele et al., 2020; Prescott, 2008), demonstrating their ability to economically active, future leaders and decision makers (NZMoH, 2016; Samoa National Youth Council, 2014).

Youth social entrepreneurship is defined as the use of start-up companies and other entrepreneurs to develop, fund, and implement solutions to social, cultural, or environmental issues (Holt, 2024). In areas such as poverty alleviation, health care, and community development, social entrepreneurship typically attempts to further broad social, cultural, and environmental goals often associated with the voluntary sector (Mair et al., 2006). Social entrepreneurship is mainly used through mobile technology for the potential beneficial purposes of engaging with others in the world (Mair et al., 2006).

3.2.1. Entrepreneurship Models

Entrepreneurship models, involving the use of digital tools and platforms, have become important (United Nations, 2020); particularly in the Pacific because of the opportunity to potentially reach masses who are not geographically close yet share the same goals. These models encourage them to collaborate online, learn about any issues, disseminate information about the group's events and activities, and raise funds (Mair et al., 2006). For example, Island Farm Samoa, are an Instagram group that support local produce growers and markets; Coconet are a commercialised Pacific coco-talanoa page that documents short story videos targeted at young viewers. Recently, in 2018, in the Fiji youth

entrepreneurs study conducted in Suva, Fiji, youth entrepreneurs used social media forums and ideas to support their role in food entrepreneurship. This included personal entrepreneurial journey blogs and posting videos and photos on social media sites, including Facebook and Instagram (Conn et al., 2020). Thus, social youth entrepreneurship can support and sustain youth unemployment by creating opportunities designed to secure productive employment opportunities and decent work to contribute to sustainable and resilient economic growth and include those who are marginalised from mainstream economic activities (ILO, 2017).

Definitions of entrepreneurship vary considerably but broadly involve leveraging business models and the marketplace to implement solutions to social, cultural, or environmental issues (Certo & Miller, 2008). Youth have the capacity to add value to solutions for NCDs but the social and economic impact of NCDs is threatening progress towards sustainable development (WHO: Regional Office for the Western Pacific, 2012). Combining youth entrepreneurial skills with design of fruit and vegetable enterprises could contribute to addressing the NCD public health issue.

Empowerment refers to the process by which people gain control over the factors and decisions that shape their lives. It is the process by which they increase their assets and attributes and build capacities to gain access, partners, networks and/or a voice, to gain control. According to Nutbeam (1998), empowerment in health promotion is a process where people gain control over decisions and actions affecting their health. It is a process where individuals and social groups can express their needs and present concerns, devise strategies for involvement in decision making, and undertake political, social, and cultural action to meet those needs (Boyle et al., 2009; Nutbeam, 1998; Wise, 2001).

‘Enabling’ implies that people cannot ‘be empowered’ by others; they can only empower themselves by acquiring more of power’s different forms (Laverack, 2008). It assumes that people are their own assets, and the role of the external agent is to catalyse, facilitate or ‘accompany’ the community in acquiring power. Community empowerment, therefore, is more than the involvement,

participation or engagement of communities. It implies community ownership and action that explicitly aims at social and political change. Community empowerment is a process of re-negotiating power to gain more control. It recognises that if some people are going to be empowered, others will be sharing or giving up some of their existing power (Baum, 2008).

Power is a central concept in community empowerment and health promotion invariably operates within the arena of a power struggle. Community empowerment necessarily addresses the social, cultural, political, and economic determinants that underpin health, and seeks to build partnerships with other sectors in finding solutions. Findings from three studies show such individuals or change Pacific youth have the capacity to influence behavioural changes particularly within their communities to lead healthier lifestyles (Baker et al., n.d.; Boyle et al., 2009; Wise, 2001). Further, research supports concepts of youth voice, Pacific youth as leaders and vital catalysts for change, and as enthusiastic innovators and entrepreneurs (Conn et al., 2016). This research is underpinned by a paradigm which acknowledges the reality of complex systems in addressing 'wicked' health problems, such as that of NCDs, and adopts an innovative 21st century participatory and design thinking approach to promoting vegetable and fruit eating.

Following on from the 1993 World Development report, 'Investing in Health', in 2000 the World Health report 'Health Systems: Improving Performance', signalled a comprehensive reform approach to strengthening health systems. For 2 decades reform has been the primary paradigm for health policy addressing goal setting, financing, delivery, involving all actors, government, non-government, private and public partnerships; indeed, it remains important today (Swinburn, 2015). In the 21st century, in the face of lack of success, the sheer difficulties of reform, and acceleration of social change, researchers and policy makers are exploring new ways of addressing difficult problems (Hunter, 2009). As a result, there is growing interest in disruptive and innovative projects that challenge norms; present models of change; position key groups as having a voice and an influence on change, especially those groups that are typically voiceless in policy; and to leverage

decision making. These new paradigms for change are based on participatory or empowerment theories, wicked problem solving, and design thinking (Brown, 2008; Hunter, 2009).

Design thinking connects with this study, given the TPAR paradigm. It focuses on empathy with users, seeking youth ideas for new prototypes, user driven ideas to be tested on a small scale, and relying on the disruptive leverage of such prototypes to generate useful debate and challenge intransigent norms (Brown, 2008; Conn et al., 2018). It fits with an entrepreneurship environment shaped by small scale 'start ups' having significant influence through the connectivity of a digital society. It is noteworthy that district health boards in Aotearoa New Zealand have recently turned to design thinking to address public health problems in communities for exactly the reasons set out here. This is bringing about tremendous change in the way the public sector works. Traditionally this was top-down and process driven. Design thinking aims to be bottom up and innovation driven, recognising that small non-traditional projects might influence change.

3.3. Social Entrepreneurship and Health Outcomes

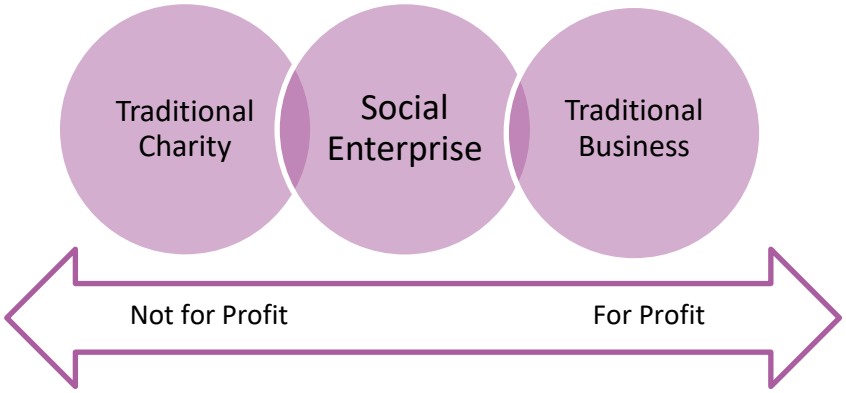
Globally there is burgeoning interest in utilising social entrepreneurship as a vehicle to tackle multifaceted societal issues, encompassing health disparities, economic inequality, and environmental sustainability (de Leeuw, 1999; Noya & Clarance, 2013; Roy et al., 2014). Social entrepreneurship is the process through which specific types of actors—the 'social entrepreneurs'—create and develop organisations such as social enterprises. It also designates a field including a broad set of initiatives with a social impact dimension in a spectrum ranging from for-profit to non-profits (Lim & Chia, 2016; Roy et al., 2014). To date, no agreed upon definition of social entrepreneurship exists (Akina, 2016; Ikihele et al., 2020; Grant, 2008, 2017). Researchers and scholars have instead constructed their own definitions with common themes derived from existing definitions, addressing the following purpose, goals, or agendas: 1) having a social purpose and mission with the use of business tools which focuses in creating social wealth; 2) trading goods and services to

achieve social, environmental, economic, and cultural outcomes; and 3) empowering communities and individuals.

Social entrepreneurship refers to the practice of utilising entrepreneurial principles and methods to address social, cultural, or environmental issues. Further defined by Tapsell and Wood (2010), social entrepreneurship is the construction and pursuit of opportunities for transformative social change through innovative activities occurring within or across economic and social communities in a historical and cultural context. According to Dave et al. (2021) it involves creating and implementing innovative solutions to tackle complex societal challenges while generating sustainable social impact. Social entrepreneurs typically operate within the nonprofit, for-profit, or hybrid sectors, with a primary focus on achieving social or environmental objectives rather than maximising financial profits (see Figure 6 for social enterprise spectrum). Grant (2017) concluded that given the complex nature of the societal and environmental factors associated with social entrepreneurship further research exploring social entrepreneurship is warranted.

Figure 6

Social Enterprise spectrum



Source: Adapted from Ikihele et al. (2020).

In Aotearoa New Zealand, there are around 2,500 social enterprises currently operating; of which around 60% are registered businesses, operating mainly as limited liability companies (Akina Foundation, 2024). Akina Foundation (2024) argues that social enterprise and the attributes associated with social enterprise is nothing new to the philosophical underpinnings of Aotearoa New Zealand fabric. They state that "for centuries, traditional Māori enterprise always had whānau, society and the environment at its' heart" (Akina Foundation, 2024, p. 34). The term social enterprise may be in its infancy, but since trading began in Aotearoa New Zealand, the social and environmental impact from that trading has been a driving force (Ikehele et al., 2020). Akina Foundation (2017) consider Te Ao Māori as the foundation social enterprise sector providing a sense of excitement which is important and allows them to learn from their past, honour those who went before them, and commit to a vision of a sustainable, equal prosperous Aotearoa New Zealand.

The history of Pacific enterprise in Aotearoa New Zealand is closely tied to patterns of migration, settlement, and the socio-economic positioning of Pacific communities. Large-scale Pacific migration to Aotearoa New Zealand occurring during the 1950s–1970s, primarily from Samoa, Tonga, the Cook Islands, Niue, and Tokelau, driven by labour shortages in Aotearoa New Zealand's manufacturing and agricultural sectors (Anae, 2012; Macpherson,

2002). Pacific migrants were delegated into low-skilled, low-wage employment, which provided limited opportunities for capital accumulation and business development (MPP, 2018). As a result, early Pacific entrepreneurial activity was generally small-scale, informal, and community-based, frequently centred around cultural needs such as church fundraising, remittance sending, and family-oriented micro-trading (Cowley et al., 2013; New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2020). These activities, while not always recognised as 'formal enterprise' in mainstream economic terms, laid the foundation for entrepreneurial practices grounded in Pacific values of reciprocity, collectivity, and service.

In academic literature, Pacific enterprise is often understood as relational rather than individualistic, shaped by cultural frameworks such as Fa'a Samoa, Kainga, or extended kinship obligations (Fairbairn-Dunlop & Makisi, 2003; Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014). Business activity for Pacific peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand has historically operated in the construct of economic survival and cultural identity. For example, many Pacific-owned businesses in Auckland during the 1970s and 1980s took the form of small retail shops, food outlets, or service-based enterprises catering to Pacific communities, such as island shops selling imported foods, music, or remittance services (Anae, 2019). These businesses generated income and reinforced cultural cohesion and transnational ties between Aotearoa New Zealand-based Pacific populations and their island homelands (Tuatagaloa, 2020).

However, the literature also points to systemic barriers that have constrained the growth of Pacific enterprises in Aotearoa New Zealand. Structural inequalities such as restricted access to capital, limited networks in mainstream business sectors, and the dominance of low-paid labour markets have meant that Pacific entrepreneurs often face higher risks and fewer safety nets than their non-Pacific counterparts (Chand & White, 2011; Tuatagaloa, 2017). Moreover, the clash between collectivist obligations and the individualised nature of Western business models has created tensions in sustaining Pacific enterprises. For instance, profits from small businesses are often redistributed within extended families or used for church commitments, reducing

reinvestment capacity (Curry et al., 2006). Scholars argue that such practices should not be framed as deficits but as reflections of culturally embedded economic systems that differ from neoliberal understandings of entrepreneurship (Haar et al., 2019).

More recently, academic studies highlight an emerging generation of Pacific entrepreneurs in Aotearoa New Zealand who are diversifying into creative industries, technology, health, and food sectors (McGavin, 2016; Mila-Schaaf & Hudson, 2009). These enterprises often merge Pacific cultural knowledge with contemporary innovation, such as food businesses that promote Pacific ingredients or wellness initiatives that address health inequities. Government agencies, including MBIE and the MPP, have also started recognising Pacific enterprise as a contributor to the country's economy, leading to targeted funding and development programmes (MPP, 2021). While challenges of access to finance, systemic racism, and market competition persist, the academic consensus underscores the resilience and adaptability of Pacific enterprise in Aotearoa New Zealand's economic landscape.

The history of Pacific enterprise in Aotearoa New Zealand is characterised by a shift from survival-based, community-focused economic practices to more diverse, innovation-driven ventures. The academic literature positions Pacific enterprise as an economic and cultural and social phenomenon, shaped by values of reciprocity, community, and identity. Far from being marginal, Pacific enterprises in Aotearoa New Zealand embody alternative forms of entrepreneurship that challenge dominant paradigms and contribute uniquely to the country's multicultural economy.

The integration of social entrepreneurship with health outcomes offers several benefits. Firstly, social entrepreneurship can lead to the development of innovative and community-centred health-based solutions that are tailored to the specific needs of underserved populations (Lim, & Chia, 2016; Noya & Clarence, 2013; Roy et al., 2014). By identifying gaps in healthcare access and delivery, social entrepreneurs can devise creative approaches to improve healthcare access, affordability, and quality. Furthermore, social entrepreneurship can contribute to health equity by addressing the root causes

of health disparities, such as socioeconomic inequality and limited access to resources (Green, 2013; Heinze et al., 2016). Through initiatives aimed at promoting education, economic empowerment, and social inclusion, social entrepreneurs can help create conditions that support better health outcomes for marginalised communities (Phillips et al., 2015; Rachmi et al., 2021). Further, social entrepreneurship can foster collaboration and partnerships across sectors, including healthcare, government, academia, and civil society. By leveraging diverse expertise and resources, social entrepreneurs can build sustainable ecosystems that facilitate holistic approaches to health promotion and disease prevention (Roy et al., 2014). Overall, social entrepreneurship has the potential to drive positive change in healthcare systems, leading to improved health outcomes, greater equity, and enhanced community well-being.

However, Roy et al. (2014) argued that despite the growing phenomenon of social entrepreneurship as a driving force for social change, the political will and onset from health policy is scarce and remains elusive. This may be because of conflicting nuances with the longevity of these enterprises and their sustainability. Essentially more robust, qualitative and quantitative research in this space is needed to investigate and mitigate these pressing issues.

While social entrepreneurship has garnered global and national-wide traction contextually, a gap persists in comprehending applicability and influence within specific cultural contexts, such as Pacific youth health entrepreneurship in the Aotearoa New Zealand context. Significant gaps in qualitative and quantitative studies revolve around the limited focus on the distinct cultural, social, and environmental determinants shaping social entrepreneurial efforts among Pacific youth. Characterised by diverse cultures, languages, and traditions, the Pacific region plays a pivotal role in shaping the motivations, challenges, and strategies of young entrepreneurs (Tuatagaloa, 2017). Furthermore, a lack of research exploring how health promotion, disease prevention, and wellness interrelate with entrepreneurship among Pacific youth, hinders understanding of their entrepreneurial ventures (Ikihele et al., 2020). Bridging these gaps necessitates a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach, integrating insights from social entrepreneurship, public health,

cultural studies, and community development to better empower Pacific youth and foster innovative solutions tailored to their needs. Given the social and cultural determinants of health directly associated with Pacific peoples, social entrepreneurship is deemed a valid and credible means to empower Pacific peoples to better manage their health needs (Tuatagaloa, 2017).

3.3.1. Health Entrepreneurship

Health entrepreneurship is the development of innovative solutions to improve health outcomes and healthcare delivery. For Pacific youth, health entrepreneurship presents an opportunity to address NCD challenges while promoting culturally appropriate health practices. Globally, health entrepreneurship among youth has focused on leveraging technology, such as mobile health (mHealth) applications and telemedicine, to bridge gaps in healthcare access (UN, 2023; WHO, 2022). In the Pacific context, such innovations could be adapted to incorporate traditional health knowledge and practices, creating hybrid models that resonate with Pacific communities. For example, a Pacific youth-led health enterprise could develop a digital platform that promotes traditional healing practices while providing modern health education and services (New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2020).

Pacific youth entrepreneurs can also play a critical role in addressing social determinants of health, such as housing, education, and nutrition. Health-focused social enterprises that address these upstream factors can have a lasting impact on the well-being of Pacific communities. However, like other forms of entrepreneurship, health ventures face barriers such as high start-up costs, limited technical expertise, and regulatory hurdles. Support from public health institutions, non-profits, and the private sector could help Pacific youth overcome these challenges and create sustainable health-focused enterprises (Ikehele, 2024).

3.3.2. Food Entrepreneurship with Pacific Communities

Food entrepreneurship refers to the creation and management of food-related businesses, encompassing diverse ventures such as restaurants, catering services, food trucks, and innovative digital platforms (Beske, & Seuring,

2014; Goodman, & Jaworska, 2020). As a critical sector within the broader economy, food entrepreneurship contributes significantly to employment, innovation, and cultural exchange (Apostolopoulos et al., 2021; Hosseininia, & Ramezani, 2016). It serves as a platform for addressing emerging consumer demands, such as sustainable and locally sourced products, while fostering regional economic growth. Globally, in countries including the United States of America (U.S.), Denmark (Aschemann-Witzel et al., 2021) and Germany Beske et al., 2014), food entrepreneurship has become a cornerstone for both economic resilience and social innovation, particularly in multicultural societies (Apostolopoulos et al., 2021; Hosseininia, & Ramezani, 2016). In Aotearoa New Zealand, this sector has grown steadily, reflecting the dynamic food culture and international reputation as a hub for culinary excellence (Oliver, 2019). For marginalised communities, including Pacific peoples, food entrepreneurship provides opportunities to overcome structural barriers, enabling participation in the economy while preserving cultural identity. Similar trends and patterns could exist among Pacific communities, but further research in this area is required.

The development of food entrepreneurship among Pacific communities is deeply intertwined with migration, cultural preservation, and economic necessity. Early Pacific migrants to Aotearoa New Zealand often turned to food-related ventures to navigate economic hardship while maintaining cultural traditions. These businesses, ranging from informal catering to small-scale food stalls, served as vehicles for cultural expression, community connection, and economic survival (Ikehele et al., 2020). Over time, Pacific food entrepreneurship evolved in response to changing societal and economic conditions. The rise of multiculturalism in New Zealand, alongside increasing demand for diverse culinary experiences, provided a platform for Pacific cuisines to gain visibility. Influential figures, such as renowned Pacific chefs and business leaders, have played a pivotal role in raising the profile of Pacific food, blending traditional and contemporary elements to appeal to broader audiences. These leaders have fostered appreciation for Pacific food and

inspired younger generations to pursue entrepreneurial pathways (Oliver, 2019).

Within Pacific communities, food entrepreneurship has unique cultural and economic significance. Food plays a central role in Pacific traditions, serving as a medium for storytelling, community building, and cultural preservation (Haden, 2005). For Pacific peoples, food-related ventures are often more than economic activities—they are avenues for maintaining and sharing cultural heritage. Businesses focused on traditional Pacific cuisines, such as Polynesian-inspired catering or artisanal food products, help to sustain ancestral knowledge and foster community pride (Pacific Island Food Revolution, 2021). Economically, food entrepreneurship provides Pacific communities with opportunities to address systemic challenges, such as limited access to stable employment and the under-representation of Pacific peoples in traditional business sectors (Pacific Island Food Revolution, 2021). However, Pacific entrepreneurs often face distinct barriers, including a lack of access to capital, limited business training, and inadequate representation in mainstream entrepreneurial networks (MPP, 2021; Tuatagaloa, 2020). Addressing these barriers is crucial to ensuring equitable participation in the food economy.

3.3.3. Pacific Youth Food Businesses

Pacific food businesses have the potential to make substantial contributions to local economies and communities, providing employment, fostering economic resilience, and promoting cultural tourism (Gooder, 2016; Tuatagaloa, 2017). By creating jobs within Pacific communities, these ventures address systemic inequities and reduce dependency on low-wage employment sectors. They also stimulate local supply chains by sourcing ingredients and services from within the community, fostering economic circulation. Socially, Pacific food businesses play a critical role in cultural preservation and community building. They provide spaces where Pacific values of hospitality, reciprocity, and collective well-being are enacted, fostering a sense of identity and belonging. Additionally, these businesses serve as platforms for education, raising awareness of Pacific cultures among wider audiences and challenging

stereotypes about Pacific peoples (Prescott, 2008; Tuatagaloa, 2017). Despite their contributions, the full potential of Pacific food entrepreneurship remains constrained by structural barriers Addressing issues such as unequal access to resources, lack of representation in entrepreneurial ecosystems, and limited policy support is crucial for enabling Pacific youth to thrive in this sector (Tuatagaloa, 2020).

Pacific youth in Aotearoa New Zealand are increasingly establishing food-related ventures, reflecting their entrepreneurial spirit and commitment to cultural preservation (Ikihele et al., 2020). Common types of Pacific food businesses include catering services specialising in traditional dishes, food trucks offering Pacific-inspired fusion cuisine, and artisanal food products that celebrate Indigenous ingredients Digital food platforms, such as online catering and social media-based businesses, have also gained popularity among Pacific youth, offering low-cost entry points into the market. These ventures often embody Pacific values, such as community-centred business practices, storytelling through food, and a commitment to health and sustainability. However, they also face unique challenges, including balancing cultural authenticity with market demands, managing resource constraints, and navigating a competitive food industry. Food entrepreneurship offers Pacific youth in Aotearoa New Zealand a powerful pathway to economic empowerment, cultural preservation, and community engagement. By blending traditional knowledge with innovative practices, Pacific food businesses can contribute to both the broader economy and the cultural landscape. Addressing systemic challenges through culturally tailored support is essential to ensuring Pacific youth entrepreneurs can thrive, creating meaningful and sustainable food ventures.

Case studies of successful youth-led ventures further illustrate the potential of this sector. Enterprises such as Kai Pasifika restaurant or youth-driven food trucks specialising in Polynesian-inspired fusion cuisine demonstrate how cultural authenticity can be blended with innovation to attract mainstream audiences while remaining anchored in community values. These success

stories, however, also reveal persistent challenges: limited access to start-up funding, a lack of culturally attuned mentorship, and minimal institutional support (Ikihele et al., 2020). The uneven distribution of resources continues to shape the landscape of Pacific youth entrepreneurship, highlighting the need for structural reforms and sustained investment to unlock the full potential of this sector.

3.4. Pacific Youth Food Entrepreneurship and the Fonofale Framework

The Fonofale framework may provide a comprehensive lens for understanding the complexities of food entrepreneurship among Pacific youth. By examining its components—family, culture, physical, spiritual, mental, and other dimensions—along with surrounding elements of environment, time, and context, this framework encompasses cultural, economic, and social factors shaping entrepreneurial endeavours (Tuatagaloa, 2017; Tunoa, 2018). Family forms the foundation of the Fonofale framework and plays a pivotal role in Pacific food entrepreneurship. Intergenerational knowledge is integral to the success of food ventures, as family elders often pass down traditional recipes, cooking techniques, and cultural practices that inform business models. This knowledge ensures cultural authenticity and creates a sense of pride and ownership among Pacific entrepreneurs. Families also serve as a source of labour and resources. In many Pacific food businesses, family members contribute to operations, from cooking and customer service to logistics and marketing. This collective approach reduces labour costs and fosters a sense of shared purpose. However, reliance on family labour can also pose challenges, including interpersonal conflicts and the strain of balancing familial obligations with business demands (Ikihele et al., 2020; Tuatagaloa, 2017).

Culture, represented as the roof in the Fonofale framework, encompasses the values and traditions that guide Pacific food businesses. Many Pacific entrepreneurs integrate cultural practices, such as communal food preparation and the use of Indigenous ingredients, into their business models (Prescott, 2008). These practices reinforce cultural identity and differentiate their offerings in the market. Cultural identity strongly influences branding and product development. Pacific entrepreneurs often highlight their heritage

through business names, packaging, and storytelling, appealing to both Pacific and non-Pacific consumers. For instance, food products labelled with Polynesian names or narratives tied to cultural traditions evoke authenticity and resonate with customers seeking unique culinary experiences. However, balancing cultural preservation with market demands remains a critical challenge (Pacific Island Food Revolution, 2021).

Physical health (Pou) is a cornerstone of successful entrepreneurship. In the food industry, the physical well-being of business owners and workers is essential for sustaining the demanding nature of operations. Long hours, physical labour, and exposure to food safety hazards can take a toll on health, necessitating a focus on wellness practices. The availability of physical resources such as land, facilities, and equipment is also critical. For many Pacific entrepreneurs' access to affordable commercial kitchens, market spaces, and storage facilities can determine business viability. Limited access such resources, particularly in urban centres, often constrains growth and innovation (Tuatagaloa, 2017). Spiritual beliefs profoundly influence the ethics and decision-making processes of Pacific food entrepreneurs. Many Pacific cultures view food as sacred, tied to spiritual practices and communal rituals. This connection shapes business ethics, emphasising reciprocity, generosity, and respect for others. Spirituality also informs food practices, such as blessing meals or sourcing ingredients sustainably to honour ancestral ties to the land. Entrepreneurs often draw strength from their spiritual beliefs, using them as a source of motivation and resilience in the face of challenges.

Mental resilience and an entrepreneurial mindset are crucial for Pacific youth navigating the competitive food industry. Entrepreneurs must demonstrate creativity, adaptability, and problem-solving skills to respond to market demands and operational hurdles. However, the pressures of entrepreneurship, including financial uncertainty and long working hours, can strain mental well-being. Stress management strategies, such as seeking family support, practicing cultural rituals, or accessing mental health resources, are vital. Initiatives that provide mentorship and peer support tailored to Pacific entrepreneurs can

foster resilience and reduce the mental health burden associated with business ownership (Tuatagaloa, 2017).

Education, skills, and training are pivotal to equipping Pacific youth for success in food entrepreneurship. Programmes that blend technical culinary skills with business management training are particularly valuable, ensuring that entrepreneurs can navigate both operational and strategic aspects of their ventures. Access to financial resources and networks also plays a decisive role. Pacific entrepreneurs often face barriers to securing loans and investments due to systemic inequities and limited financial literacy. Establishing culturally responsive funding initiatives, such as microloans or grants, can help bridge these gaps and promote business growth (Ikihele et al., 2020). Environmental factors, such as access to natural resources and sustainability concerns, significantly affect food entrepreneurship. Many Pacific entrepreneurs prioritise sustainable practices, such as sourcing local ingredients and reducing food waste, aligning with cultural values of stewardship. However, environmental challenges, such as climate change and resource scarcity, pose risks to long-term business viability. The dimension of time reflects historical and contemporary influences on Pacific food entrepreneurship. Historical context, including the migration experiences of Pacific peoples, shapes the cultural narratives embedded in food businesses. Meanwhile, current market trends, such as the growing demand for multicultural cuisines, provide opportunities for Pacific entrepreneurs to expand their reach (Tuatagaloa, 2020).

Contextual factors, including socio-economic conditions, structural inequities, and regulatory environments, significantly shape entrepreneurial opportunities for Pacific youth. Many young people operate within low-income communities characterised by limited access to financial capital, entrepreneurial networks, and business infrastructure, which restricts their capacity to develop and sustain enterprises (Ikihele et al., 2020). In addition, navigating complex regulatory systems—such as food safety and licensing requirements—poses significant barriers, particularly for small-scale or start-up operators with minimal institutional support. These systemic constraints underscore the

necessity of advocacy for policies that address entrenched inequities and foster equitable participation in the food economy. Without such structural change, Pacific youth entrepreneurs remain disadvantaged in comparison to their counterparts in more resource-rich contexts.

The Fonofale framework (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001) offers a culturally grounded perspective for understanding Pacific food entrepreneurship. This model emphasises the interconnectedness of family, culture, spirituality, physical and mental well-being, and broader systemic structures, providing an analytical lens that extends beyond conventional economic measures of entrepreneurship. Applying Fonofale to Pacific food enterprises highlights how the strengths of cultural identity and community belonging intersect with the vulnerabilities of systemic marginalisation. Culturally responsive initiatives that enhance access to resources, strengthen mental resilience, and promote cultural identity are therefore critical to enabling Pacific youth to flourish within the food sector. In this sense, food entrepreneurship can become a transformative platform for economic empowerment, cultural preservation, and holistic community well-being.

3.5. Conclusion

This critical literature review highlights the dynamic interplay of systemic, cultural, and personal factors shaping Pacific youth food entrepreneurship in Aotearoa New Zealand. Key findings include the significance of cultural identity and traditional knowledge in creating unique business opportunities, systemic barriers such as inequitable access to capital and complex regulatory frameworks, and personal challenges faced by young entrepreneurs, including balancing familial obligations with business demands. The Fonofale framework emerges as a valuable lens, illustrating the interconnectedness of family, culture, physical resources, spirituality, mental well-being, and socio-economic factors in shaping entrepreneurial pathways.

3.5.1. Implications for Future Research and Practice

Future research should explore the evolving role of Pacific youth in food entrepreneurship by focusing on longitudinal studies that track entrepreneurial

journeys and outcomes. Investigating the effectiveness of targeted interventions, such as culturally tailored funding programs, mentorship initiatives, and business training, would provide actionable insights. Additionally, there is a need to examine the role of gender, socio-economic status, and geography to better understand diverse experiences within Pacific entrepreneurship. From a practical perspective, fostering Pacific food entrepreneurship requires systemic and community-level initiatives. Policymakers should streamline regulatory processes and increase access to funding tailored to the needs of aspiring and those who are of Pacific entrepreneurs. Community organisations can provide mentorship and training that integrates cultural values with modern business practices. Encouraging collaborations between Pacific entrepreneurs and mainstream businesses or academic institutions can also amplify their impact and reach.

3.5.2. Final Reflections and Recommendations

Integrating cultural frameworks, such as the Fonofale framework, is essential for a nuanced understanding of Pacific youth food entrepreneurship. The Fonofale framework highlights the holistic nature of Pacific entrepreneurship, emphasising the importance of cultural identity, family support, and spiritual values. By adopting culturally responsive approaches, stakeholders can better support Pacific youth to navigate challenges, leverage their strengths, and create sustainable, culturally enriched food ventures. This approach fosters economic empowerment and promotes cultural preservation and well-being within Pacific communities.

Improving fruit- and vegetable-based enterprises to enhance health outcomes for Pacific peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand requires a multifaceted approach that incorporates contributions from various sectors. The following strategies highlight how these efforts can be tailored to address the unique needs and cultural contexts of Pacific communities while fostering sustainable and health-focused entrepreneurship.

Private Sector Involvement

The private sector can play a pivotal role by supporting social enterprises that emphasise health and well-being. Initiatives could include businesses focused on affordable access to fresh produce, culturally relevant food products, and health-conscious innovations. These enterprises could also create employment opportunities for Pacific youth while addressing health disparities through community-driven solutions.

Public Health Community Development

Public health initiatives should leverage community settings to promote fruit and vegetable consumption. This could involve creating spaces for health education, food preparation demonstrations, and partnerships with local food markets to increase accessibility to fresh produce. By situating these efforts within Pacific communities, public health interventions can become more culturally relevant and impactful.

Political Sector Engagement

The political sector has a critical role in supporting agricultural policies that empower Pacific communities to create self-sustaining gardens and other food initiatives. Policies encouraging urban farming, community gardens, and access to land can help mitigate food insecurity while fostering a sense of ownership and connection to cultural practices. Moreover, local authorities could invest in supporting Pacific start-ups through funding programmes, mentorship, and regulatory assistance, enabling entrepreneurial growth in the food sector.

Education Sector

Incorporating nutrition education into school curricula is essential for instilling lifelong healthy eating habits. This could involve integrating messages about the importance of fruit and vegetable consumption and their role in preventing diet-related diseases. Utilising social media platforms to disseminate health messages can further amplify these efforts, particularly among Pacific youth, who are highly engaged in digital spaces. Educational initiatives should also support entrepreneurial skill development by embedding food enterprise concepts into curriculum models that align with local and regional contexts.

Cultural Settings and Youth Voice

Recognising the voice of Pacific youth as a catalyst for change is critical. Engaging young people in food system initiatives through culturally aligned mechanisms emphasises collective, community-oriented values over individual pursuits. Encouraging family involvement alongside youth participation ensures that interventions align with Pacific traditions of collectivism. By prioritising these cultural perspectives, initiatives can achieve greater community buy-in and sustainability.

Policy and Practice

Policy revisions are necessary to improve food and nutrition guidelines that promote fruit and vegetable consumption among Pacific peoples. These guidelines should emphasise the cultural significance of specific foods and their health benefits, facilitating informed choices within communities. Additionally, the MoH Aotearoa New Zealand could support programmes that enhance accessibility and affordability of produce, bridging gaps in nutrition equity. In the long term, these integrated strategies could empower Pacific youth to take leadership roles in entrepreneurial initiatives that support health and well-being. By fostering collective action and addressing systemic barriers, these efforts have the potential to reduce the prevalence of diet-related diseases and create lasting improvements in health outcomes for Pacific communities in Aotearoa New Zealand.

These first few chapters, chapters one to three set the context of the political, systematic issues that surrounds Pacific youth in creating and developing sustainable fruit- and vegetable-based enterprise, answering the first research question. Chapter Four focuses on the study design used to establish critical engagement between myself as the researcher and the study co-researchers.

Chapter 4

Research Design

4.1. Introduction

In the research, I used a qualitative Pacific based research approach— TPAR methodology. In this chapter, I discuss, examine, and critique the epistemology, theoretical and methodological elements of the study, the methods used, fieldwork, ethical considerations, and data analysis steps, and outline how data collection methods and data analysis aligned with my researcher positionality. The experiences of the Pacific youth in this study were explored through the lens of Talanoa; a storytelling and conversational method deeply rooted in Pacific epistemology and ontology. Subsequently, I discuss the data analysis process used in search of key themes and sub-themes to answer the research questions two—What are the perceptions and strategies of Pacific youth in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand pertaining to fruit- and vegetable-based entrepreneurship; and three—How can TPAR support Pacific voices in fruit and vegetable promotion. Analysis is framed within TPAR and influenced by Kemmis et al. (2014) and Conn et al. (2020) who used a similar Pacific PAR informed approach with Fijian youth entrepreneurs.

4.1.1. Study Aim

The central research question was: How can Pacific youth be supported to develop fruit and vegetable enterprises? From this primary question, three key sub-questions were developed. These are as follows:

1) What is the current and contextual knowledge about Pacific related NCDs, dietary food patterns, and the food system in Aotearoa New Zealand?

2) What are the perceptions and strategies of Pacific youth in Auckland concerning fruit- and vegetable-based entrepreneurship?

3) How can Talanoa, informed by PAR be utilised to support Pacific youth voices and strategies in fruit and vegetable promotion?

Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles – Study context

In this study, I drew on the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi—partnership, participation, and protection—to inform the research design, relationships, and analysis within the Aotearoa New Zealand context. This approach was further grounded in AUT's Te Aronui values of tika, pono, and aroha (AUT, 2026) which shaped the ethical and relational foundation of the research from its inception and guided all those involved, including myself as the researcher, academic supervisors, and participants. These values align with Indigenous and relational research approaches that emphasise integrity, respect, and care throughout the research process (Durie, 1998; Smith, 2012). Prior to data collection, careful consideration of these principles was reflected in the ethics approval process, ensuring cultural safety, informed consent, and the prioritisation of participant wellbeing.

Partnership was enacted through the use of TPAR, positioning Pacific youth as active collaborators and knowledge holders (Vaioleti, 2006). Participation was enabled through culturally grounded talanoa sessions, creating inclusive spaces for meaningful dialogue. Protection was maintained through ongoing trust-building, reciprocity, and relational accountability. In the analysis phase, these principles were woven through by privileging participant voice and collective meaning-making rather than imposing a solely researcher-driven lens (Smith, 2012). Together, Te Tiriti principles and Te Aronui values ensured the research remained culturally grounded, ethically robust, and responsive to Pacific youth contexts.

4.1.2. Pacific Research Frameworks

Grounded in epistemological and ontological Pacific world views, Pacific health research is designed to address the Pacific ways of being and doing which underpin the health and well-being of Pacific peoples. These understandings are generally underrepresented or considered insignificant in Euro-centric frameworks. Sopoaga (2011, as cited in MoH, 2008) contended that Pacific health models encompass the culture, values, and health beliefs of

Pacific peoples. Since 2008, numerous Pacific ethnic specific health models have been developed, designed to suit their respective cultures and better meet Pacific population health needs. These have emerged to reflect both the differences and similarities in Pacific communities that can be utilised by researchers and health professionals within health care settings to enhance qualitative understanding and insight into Pacific-centric data (Thomsen et al., 2018). Models include, but are not limited to, Fonofale and Fa'afaletui models - Samoan, Kakala model - Tongan, and Tivaevae model - Cook Islands (Agnew et al., 2004).

To date, due in part to the diversity of Pacific nations, no universal Pacific health model has been designed that meets the needs of Pacific peoples as a collective. Rather, some Pacific frameworks are available and practicing health professionals, researchers, and students are encouraged to select the framework best suited to the context and needs of the respective Pacific-specific individuals, groups, and/or population (HRC, 2014; Naepi, 2015).

4.1.1. Pacific Philosophy

Pacific research methodologies encompass Indigenous research frameworks grounded in the ontological and epistemological perspectives of Pacific communities. These methodologies serve as a form of decolonial resistance, acknowledging and embracing the legitimacy of Pacific ontologies and epistemologies. They enable research endeavours that authentically reflect the diverse voices and worldviews of Pacific peoples, countering the historical patterns of colonial research that have often mischaracterised and stereotyped them.

This resurgence of Pacific research methodologies empowers Pacific individuals and communities to redefine and critically examine the Pacific region from a genuinely Pacific ethnic specific standpoint. These methodologies can be both regionally specific, deeply rooted in local contexts like Vanua or Kakala; and pan-Pacific, reflecting shared values such as respect, reciprocity, communal relationships, collective responsibility, gerontocracy, humility, love and charity, service, and spirituality (HRC, 2021; Vaioleti, 2016).

It is important to note that Pacific research methodologies exhibit a dual nature, capable of both pan-Pacific and regional applications. As more Pacific individuals, including researchers, actively engage in the research space, these methodologies continue to evolve and expand, enriching the research landscape with diverse perspectives and insights from across the Pacific diaspora.

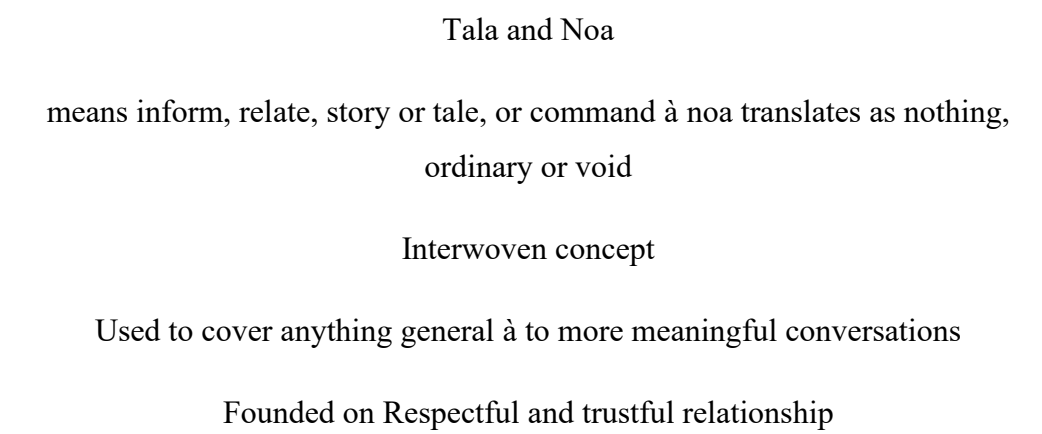
4.1.2. Talanoa Methodology

Talanoa defined

Talanoa is used widely across the Pacific but, in the Samoan context Talanoa translates as, to talk, discuss issues between individuals, engage in dialogue and discussion (MP, 2018; Seiuli, 2013; Vaioleti, 2006). Talanoa is a voice-based qualitative methodology, rather than a research method which aims to measure a phenomenon (Fa‘avae et al., 2016). Talanoa is an effective Pacific research method for deriving honest and reliable information from Pacific people (Vaioleti, 2006). Aligned with Pacific epistemological views such as culture, family, and the four dimensions of health—spiritual, physical, emotional, mental—talanoa uses conversation or ‘talanoa’ to create a healthy environment for both researcher and participant. Because of its flexibility, sensitivity and cultural appropriateness when dealing with Pacific Island participants, the talanoa method has been further developed and adopted by several Pacific researchers (Otsuka, 2006; Taufe’ulungaki, 2005; Vaioleti, 2015). Other methods or Pacific research models developed and adopted to research Pacific related issues in Aotearoa New Zealand include Fonofale (Anae et al., 2001), Meaalofa (Seiuli, 2013), Fa’afaletui (Goodyear-Smith & ‘Ofanoa, 2022; Tamasese et al., 2005), Matuaofaiva (Silipa 2004), Talanoa (Vaioleti, 2006), and Teu le Vā (Anae, 2007; Hang, 2015).

Figure 7

Talanoa



Source. Adapted from Vaioleti (2015)

Talanoa involves recruiting participants to work in partnership with academic researchers. The Talanoa approach enables "a personal encounter where people story their issues, their realities and aspirations" (Vaioleti, 2006, p. 21). Talanoa processes in this study are guided by Talanoa principles of respect, trust, reciprocity, and Pacific cultural competencies (Otsuka, 2005; Vaioleti 2006). Talanoa encourages face to face communication, capacity building, and networking. Talanoa epistemology and practice provide a space for Pacific peoples to express themselves in research projects (Conn et al., 2016; Fairbairn-Dunlop et al., 2014). These processes ensure that long term relationships are fostered for further entrepreneurship development and youth empowerment.

The empowerment agenda is key as it ensures that the outcome of the study benefits those involved. Society is predominantly adult-driven, and young people are often passive recipients of decisions regarding their life course, development, and health (Wong et al., 2010). Traditionally in the Pacific, leadership has been the domain of the older generation (or at least a hierarchical approach to the way of living) (Fa'alau, 2016); yet, with today's

youthful demographic and fast changing world with new technology taking centre stage, regional leaders are keen to find culturally appropriate ways to promote youth leadership (Conn et al., 2014; Wong et al., 2010). In this case, Talanoa creates a space for new ideas, raised by those who typically are not involved in decision making. Digital storytelling, combined with the use of photos, video making, and participatory mapping, alongside marketing and design apps, further develops this space and provides a sense of youth entrepreneurship empowerment, particularly on social media platforms including Facebook and Instagram. Thus, the youth participants were active in making informed decisions throughout all aspects of the research process.

Talanoa was chosen as the research methodology due to its alignment with the preferred communication styles of Pacific peoples, both in formal and informal settings. However, it is necessary to critically examine the strengths and limitations of this approach. Talanoa is well-suited for facilitating open and honest discussions, enabling participants to freely express their ideas and experiences. It aligns with the communication preferences of Pacific individuals, fostering a comfortable and culturally sensitive environment for dialogue. Talanoa is particularly effective in deriving reliable information when engaging with Pacific peoples (Vaioleti, 2006). It embodies the essence of the Pacific people's belief systems, rooted in their Indigenous ways, and integrates functional knowledge with PAR.

Open-ended questions, while valuable for exploring sensitive topics, can sometimes inhibit individuals from sharing due to discomfort or fear of expressing unwarranted emotions. Researchers must consider these challenges and explore strategies to mitigate them which can include examining how other researchers have addressed similar issues in the context of open-ended questions and sensitivity in their research. These understandings can contribute to refining the Talanoa, and its related elements used in this study. However, while Talanoa serves a valuable purpose in research by providing a platform for authentic and meaningful conversations, it is essential to continually evaluate its effectiveness in various research contexts.

In summary, this research adopts the qualitative Pacific research methodology known as talanoa, which is deeply rooted in Pacific epistemological frameworks, such as the Fonofale framework. Talanoa's ontological essence aligns with the beliefs and ways of Indigenous Pacific peoples, making it a suitable choice for research that seeks to engage with and empower Pacific communities. However, researchers should remain attentive to the challenges and complexities that can arise during talanoa sessions and continually refine the methodology to ensure its effectiveness in different research contexts.

4.1.3. PAR

PAR is a collaborative methodology that involves recruiting participants as co-researchers, fostering a partnership between them and academic researchers. This approach is rooted in co-design principles (Ledwith & Springett, 2010). PAR is distinctive because it engages those affected by a particular issue as active participants in reflection, data collection, and action aimed at improving health and reducing health disparities. This participatory approach stands in contrast to the historical dominance of epidemiological research in addressing public health issues. Since the 1960s, there has been a shift towards more qualitative, critical theory-based methodologies, with a focus on involving the community directly in research processes. This shift seeks to promote democratic engagement and address inequalities. PAR, founded on the principles of action research, combines rigorous research elements with a focus on effecting positive social change (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2014).

PAR promotes active engagement with communities, empowering them to bring about tangible improvements in their quality of life and health. It emphasises democratic participation and challenges entrenched inequalities. The iterative nature of PAR, involving cycles of research, action, and reflection, fosters ongoing learning and adaptation. It strives to enhance participants' awareness of their situation, enabling informed action. The impact of researchers in effecting real change in communities can be underestimated or overlooked (Baum et al., 2006).

Participatory Action Research (PAR) can be time-consuming due to its open and dialogic nature, requiring patience, deep listening, and at times a

minimisation of researcher-driven feedback (Kindon, Pain, & Kesby, 2007; McIntyre, 2008). Within the context of Talanoa, sessions often extended for an hour or more, reflecting the free-flowing conversational style that is central to Pacific research methodologies (Vaioleti, 2006). However, time constraints during Talanoa sometimes necessitated the use of strategic questioning to ensure that dialogue remained focused while still maintaining cultural integrity. Although these challenges are an inherent reality in participatory research, it is important to recognise that Talanoa, as a culturally appropriate and action-oriented methodology, privileges co-researcher voices and seeks to inform, influence, and drive meaningful change (Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014; Nabobo-Baba, 2008).

In summary, PAR, grounded in participatory and action research philosophies (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014), provides a dynamic approach that actively involves communities in addressing health issues and social inequalities. The benefits of PAR include empowerment, democratic engagement, and enhanced relevance of outcomes (Reason & Bradbury, 2008), while its challenges often involve time constraints, resource limitations, and the potential underestimation of the researcher's role and influence (Cook, 2012). Despite these challenges, methodologies such as Talanoa within PAR remain both culturally relevant and action-oriented, providing opportunities for collective problem-solving and the co-creation of solutions that are embedded within Pacific values and ways of knowing (Anae, 2010; Vaioleti, 2006).

Figure 8

Principles and Goals of PAR

<table>
<tr><th colspan="5">Key Principles of PAR</th></tr>
<tr><td>A commitment to the participation of ordinary people as co-researchers are involved in every aspect of the research</td><td>Respect for the knowledge of all participants</td><td>Mutual learning among participants</td><td>Attention to the needs of marginalized or disempowered groups and people</td><td>Action to promote social justice for those marginalized people and others like them</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="5">Key Goals of PAR</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">To produce practical knowledge</td><td>To take action and make the knowledge available</td><td colspan="2">To be transformative both socially and for the individual who take part</td></tr>
</table>

Note: This model is a summary of the goals associated with using PAR throughout research. Adapted from Schneider (2012, p. 153).

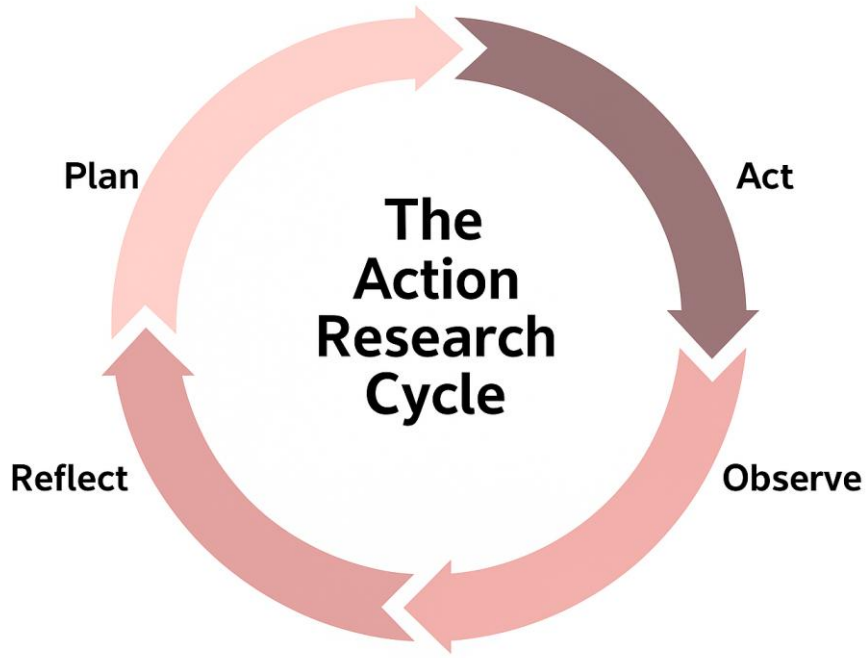
4.1.4. TPAR

TPAR is a voice-based and change oriented qualitative methodology, and Talanoa epistemology and practice provides a space for Pacific peoples to express themselves in research projects (Conn et al., 2016; Fairbairn-Dunlop et al., 2014) – see Figure 10 for the TPAR artefact. Talanoa was developed by Vaioleti in 2006 to better understand Pacific ways of doing things to support mental health among Pacific peoples, as combining Talanoa with PAR allows for Pacific based research to emerge with an action agenda (Conn et al., 2016). Founded on the underpinning philosophies of action research, TPAR is an

approach widely considered to be a developmental research methodology with rigorous design, data collection, and theoretical integration elements ('research'), which sit alongside a change, 'action', agenda (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2014) (Fig. 8). Action research is also widely promoted as an effective framework for empowerment and emancipation to improve a social situation or condition. This research deployed a highly participatory form of action research which emphasises collaborative meetings with research participants who become co-designers in positive social change via collective, critical and reflective inquiry.

Figure 9

The Action Research Cycle

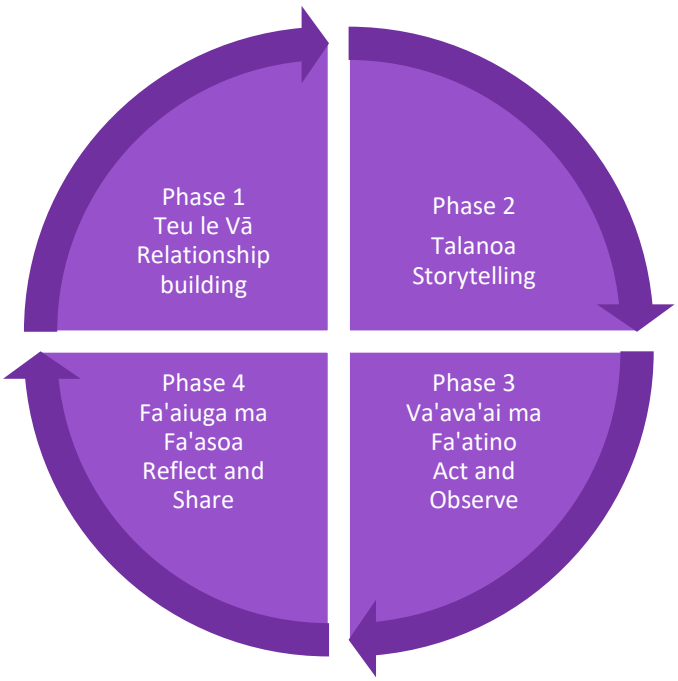


Note: This Action Research Cycle was produced by Losi with the use of GenAi in 2025 which summarises the key action points throughout the Action research cycle phases. Adapted from *"The action research planner: Doing critical participatory action research,"* (p. 19), by S. Kemmis, and R. McTaggart, 2014, Springer. Copyright 2014 by Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart.

For the current research, it was envisaged to use the same approach as deployed in Fiji and South Auckland. In late 2018, as field researcher working with young entrepreneurs in Suva, Fiji, storytelling and talanoa based methods were used to build strong relations to reciprocate trust and respect so the co-researchers could voice their opinions and share in group discussion. These methods allowed the co-researchers/entrepreneurs to express their ideas and provide relevant solutions to NCD prevention including that of a digital social media enterprise such as Instagram or writing in a blog. Thus, the research setting encouraged capacity building and networking that eventuated in long term relationships for further entrepreneurship development and, most importantly, youth empowerment.

Figure 10

Artefact: Talanoa Participatory Action Research framework



Note: This model was produced by Losi Sa'u Lilo in 2021 showcasing the Talanoa participatory action research cycles within the Samoan content. From "Fijian youth entrepreneurs championing health through sustainable food systems" by "C. Conn, R. Cammock, L. Sa'u Lilo, & S. Nayar, 2021, *Health Promotion International*, *36*(2), p. 449-459. Adapted with permission.

Action research is a participatory design methodology that focuses on active involvement in the research process, with emphasis of the central role of the target population. Empowerment of youth to face significant challenges and issues, in the context of a fast-changing world**,** is underpinned by theory in which individuals are supported to think positively about their ability to make changes and master issues experienced in their social environment (Finlay, 2010). In partnership with youth and in the context of rapid social and technological change (World Development Report, 2016), it is envisaged this research will seek to explore ways of working with young people. The study is unique and exciting as it is based on a genuine commitment to empower youth with the potential of creating engaged citizens. The strength of TPAR in this study is that it positions young people as the experts in their own lives, with unique insights that may differ from that of adults.

4.1.5. Researcher Position in TPAR

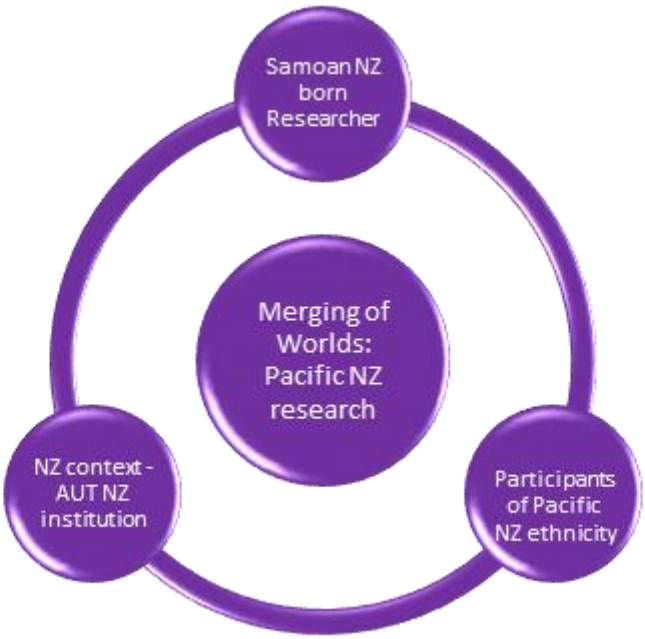
With a wealth of experience in the healthcare sector, I have an extensive track record of empowering and assisting communities in their journey towards adopting healthier lifestyles in their overall health outcomes. This expertise extends to fostering improvements in both the short- and long-term. Given my extensive background, the choice of TPAR methodology was a natural and well-suited alignment with my experience and knowledge. It served as an apt approach for exploring the experiences of the study's co-researchers. Through Talanoa, the research aimed to gain a deeper understanding of their unique perspectives and contributions to the realm of health and entrepreneurship. During my working experiences and academic pathway in sport, health, and well-being, I was informed of the lifestyle diseases experienced by many Pacific peoples. I was astounded at the poor health outcomes faced by many Pacific peoples and understood that this was an area in dire need of improvement. Better health outcomes could be attained either serving people to help prevent these diseases through raising awareness or changing unhealthy lifestyle behaviours. Over a decade later, my passion and drive have not

changed, and I remain determined to help contribute to current solutions to this health pandemic.

Given these experiences I am better positioned as an insider Samoan student in public health research to serve, as well as being in an outsider role for the wider-Pacific community, in this case, the Pacific youth health entrepreneurs, stakeholders, and potentially the wider Pacific community. The concept of the insider/outsider researcher for me continues to be a contested area given the diverse Pacific nations and their unique definitive cultural characteristics. Given I am of the generation born outside of the Pacific nations, this creates cultural nuances to which only the Pacific diaspora can relate. Further, these dimensions as seen in Figure 11 provides an illustration of the standalone worlds that I, as a researcher, am encompassed by that makes this research even more of a challenge and diverse. Therefore, my task is to draw from each individual aspect of these 'worlds' to create a better understanding of a public health agenda for Pacific, by Pacific. Nonetheless, all Pacific nations and their ethnic diaspora share similar cultural characteristics that define them and their peoples. My challenge was to ensure the voices of the Pacific youth members involved in this research and the theoretical body of research can transpire into ample change for the better in the health movement for Pacific peoples, especially Pacific youth.

Figure 11

Merging of Worlds – representation of researcher, co-researchers, and Western research context.



Note. This researcher positionality model was created by the author, Losi, which demonstrates the multiple worlds, relationships, and responsibilities navigated by the researcher and highlights the interconnected cultural, academic, professional, familial, and community contexts within which this Talanoa Participatory Action Research study is situated.

My positionality as a Samoan researcher plays a critical role in shaping the methodological orientation of this study. Research is never neutral; it is influenced by the researcher's identity, worldview, and cultural grounding (Smith, 2012). In my case, being Samoan means, I carry with me a set of values, practices, and relational ways of knowing that directly align with TPAR. At the same time, I hold a dual position: as both an insider who understands the nuances of Pacific relationality, and an outsider working within academic institutions that are grounded in Western epistemologies. This dual positioning requires careful reflexivity, where I navigate the vā (relational space) between myself, co-researchers, and the academy (Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014).

TPAR is particularly well-suited to research with Pacific youth because it emphasizes relationships, dialogue, and collective action. Its commitment to co-creation and reflection mirrors the Samoan worldview of Fa‘a Samoa, which prioritises tautua (service), alofa (love), and fa‘aaloalo (respect). In practice, TPAR requires researchers to share power, to listen actively, and to create spaces where participants’ voices guide the research direction (Vaioleti, 2006). These are not simply methodological choices for me, but cultural obligations rooted in my heritage. As a Samoan, I cannot separate the ethical responsibility of serving others from the methodological requirement of ensuring that co-researchers are treated as equals.

Samoan symbolism provides a powerful metaphorical framework that both grounds and enriches. The fale (house), central to the Fonofale model of health (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001), represents the holistic nature of this research. Just as a fale requires strong foundations and interconnected posts, the research process requires grounding in family, culture, and spirituality. similarly constructs a collective shelter in which knowledge is co-created and protected. The tanoa (kava bowl) is another significant symbol, reflecting the centrality of dialogue. In traditional settings, the tanoa is the gathering point where voices are heard, stories are shared, and collective decisions are made. This directly parallels the talanoa process within TPAR, which relies on open, respectful, and honest conversation (Vaioleti, 2013).

Equally important is the concept of vā — the relational space that binds people together. In Samoan thought, vā is not empty space but a site of ethical responsibility. To nurture vā means to uphold harmony, respect, and care within relationships (Anae, 2016). Within this research, my positionality obliges me to honour the vā between myself and the co-researchers, recognising that research encounters are not transactions but living relationships that extend beyond the research timeframe. This ethical dimension resonates strongly with TPAR’s commitment to sustaining relationships and producing outcomes that benefit the community, not only the researcher (Tamasese et al., 2005).

Another symbol relevant to my positionality is lalaga (weaving). Weaving reflects the way stories, perspectives, and ideas are brought together to create a collective outcome. TPAR’s iterative cycles of action and reflection are akin to the weaving process: each voice and contribution forms part of a larger, interconnected pattern. As a researcher, I

see myself not as the weaver but as one of the threads, contributing alongside the voices of Pacific youth to create something stronger and more enduring.

It is important to acknowledge that not all participants in this study were Samoan. Using Samoan symbolism does not mean imposing a singular cultural framework across all Pacific youth, whose identities and heritages are diverse. Rather, my positionality as a Samoan researcher provides a culturally authentic entry point, a lens through which I interpret the research process. By being transparent about this standpoint, I situate myself within the research without claiming universality. This reflexive stance recognises both the specificity of Samoan culture and the interconnectedness of wider Pacific worldviews (Huffer & Qalo, 2004).

Conclusively, my positionality aligns closely with TPAR because both are grounded in relational, collective, and ethical principles. Samoan symbolism provides a meaningful way to articulate and embody these principles, shaping the way I approach co-researchers, facilitate talanoa, and interpret key outcomes. By weaving together talanoa, vā, and cultural symbols such as the fale and tanoa, I position myself as a researcher who is accountable not only to the academy but also to the communities I serve. This alignment ensures that the research remains both culturally grounded and methodologically robust, reflecting the lived realities and aspirations of Pacific youth.

4.2. Methods and Procedures

4.2.1 Data Collection

Recruitment

This research focused on working with Pacific youth; although, to date, there is no agreed upon definition of Pacific youth. Definitions of youth across the Pacific are broadly interpreted. In Samoa, the national youth policy defines youth as individuals between the ages of 18 and 35 years; whereas in Fiji the Youth Entrepreneurs Council describes its target group as 18 to 40 years of age. The current research follows the spirit of Tuagalu's (2011) definition of youth as those aged between 13 and 50 years

(Tuagalu, 2011). Given the youthful nature of the Samoan population and most Pacific populations in general, I envisage the findings from this investigation to be useful to other Pacific neighbouring countries.

Focusing on Pacific youth provides valuable insight into the engagement of young people in NCD research across the South Pacific region. While the findings of this study are directly applicable to promoting healthy eating solutions among the Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand population, they also have the potential to inform research in other Pacific Island nations, particularly initiatives involving youth. Additionally, given that Pacific populations are predominantly youthful (United Nations, 2019), these findings may offer relevant guidance for addressing NCD-related health challenges in other contexts where young people represent a significant demographic and are increasingly affected by diet-related illnesses.

Initially, the study aimed to explore the experiences of Pacific youth in urban Samoa; however, border closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a shift to the Aotearoa New Zealand context. Consequently, participants were Pacific youth residing in Auckland, identifying as Samoan, Tongan, or Niuean, aged between 18 and 45 years, and either engaged in fruit- and vegetable-based entrepreneurship or expressing a clear interest in developing such enterprises. The study aimed to recruit four to 10 young youth engaged in activities ranging from market gardening, retail enterprises, family-based initiatives, school projects, or personal passion projects, all of which promoted fruit and vegetable consumption through mechanisms such as social media or blogging.

The co-researchers were invited via in-person meetings, email, or telephone, and were provided with information sheets and consent forms at least two weeks prior to participation to allow adequate time for consideration and to determine whether additional recruitment was required. An information evening was initially planned to provide further details about the study, time and resource constraints prevented its implementation.

Two participant types across different settings were recruited: two focus groups with Pacific youth interested in future food entrepreneurship; and three in-depth, semi-structured interviews with youth aged 18–50 years actively involved in food-based social enterprises in Auckland. All Talanoa sessions were conducted in locations

convenient for each co-researcher to maximise engagement and cultural comfort (Conn et al., 2021; Vaioleti, 2015). Data collection occurred in two phases, May 2021 to September 2021 and May 2023 to October 2023, reflecting disruptions caused by COVID-19 lockdowns.

The co-researchers were selected based on Pacific ethnicity and age, building on previous studies in Fiji (Conn et al., 2020) and South Auckland for which I was field researcher and my academic supervisors were lead researchers. Recruitment sources included contacts from prior research—10 participants from the South Auckland study and four from the Fiji study, and scoping exercises conducted in local food markets and online platforms. I conducted an online search and personally contacted one potential participant. Following guidance from my academic supervisor, I also reached out to the programme administrator of the AUT Co-Starters programme, resulting in one individual expressing interest in participating. In total, 12 Pacific youth participated: one co-researcher from the initial online search, another co-researcher, Etienne, through the AUT Co-starters programme, Alex. as a personal contact who through word of mouth recommended three other co-researchers, and six first year tertiary students based at AUT. This sampling approach ensured diversity in experiences while maintaining a focus on youth engagement in the food and health space – refer to Table 6 for more information about each co-researcher.

Data Collection Process

For this study, data collection occurred through adapting a framework to suit the researcher Samoan lens within the Pacific context (see Figure 10 for the TPAR artefact).

Phase 1 Teu le Vā – Relationship building and planning: In Phase one, Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee approval was needed. Additionally, building and establishing vital key stakeholder relationships within the Auckland region to support community engagement, ‘Te le Vā’, in support of this research was undertaken.

Phase 2 Talanoa - Storytelling and design: Once ethics approval was gained (see Appendix A) the data collection phase began. This involved the recruitment process described in the previous section. Random sampling and a

series of action oriented participatory groups in a workshop format were set up to explore possibilities of social media and digital literacy, and participatory methodologies and ideas behind healthy eating.

Phase 3 Va'ava'ai ma Fa'atino– Act and Observe: The co-researchers came together in interactive talanoa sessions to inform about the actions and observation stage, and to seek feedback and suggestions for a co-design model. Reflections included and considered what did and did not work and why, what the key elements of a model might look like, and future considerations.

Phase 4 Fa'aiuga ma Fa'asoa – Reflect and Share: The findings from this research will be disseminated and communicated to communities in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand, including the co-researchers and representatives from government and non-government agencies, using a mix of online and face to face mechanisms. It is envisaged a talanoa session will be held to communicate the experience and outcomes of the study, with an opportunity for input by the wider stakeholder community. Conference presentations will also be an important dissemination tool.

4.2.1. Setting

The interviews took place either at the Auckland University of Technology City Campus, at co-researchers' place of residence, or at a local café convenient to the participant. The focus groups took place on two separate occasions, first in a conference room based at the Auckland University of Technology North Campus in North Shore City, Auckland, and the second at the Heart Foundation conference room. Participants were provided free VIP parking to the venue and offered refreshments throughout the duration of the talanoa sessions. Selecting a place which was informal, relatively quiet, and easily accessible for the participants allowed them to talk confidently (Krueger & Casey, 2014).

4.2.2. Procedure

In this study, qualitative methods including focus groups and semi-structured interviews were employed. Open-ended questions allowed participants to share their experiences, perspectives, and ideas in their own words (Johnson &

Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Such methods are particularly suited to exploring the 'how' and 'why' of participants' behaviours and decisions, rather than simply the 'what', 'where', or 'when' (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). This research adopted Pacific-centred qualitative approaches, including Talanoa which utilise semi-structured formats to facilitate relational and culturally appropriate dialogue (Thaman, 1992; Vaioleti, 2006). Semi-structured interviewing allows flexibility for new ideas and themes to emerge during the discussion, enabling deeper insight into participants' experiences (Trumbull, 2000). The Talanoa method, in particular, has been identified as an effective approach for eliciting honest and meaningful narratives from Pacific peoples, fostering trust, respect, and culturally safe engagement (Vaioleti, 2006).

Talanoa uses conversation or talanoa to create a healthy environment for both the researcher and the participant (Vaioleti, 2006); however, these conversations must align with the Pacific epistemological views best described as the Fonofale framework (Nonu-Reid et al., 2000). I conducted all talanoa sessions and recorded them using a recording app on an iPhone 11, hand-held recorder, and laptop. All talanoa sessions were planned for a minimum of 30 minutes to two hours maximum (Morgan, 1996).

In line with Pacific culture and practice, each talanoa session opened and closed with a prayer. Refreshments were provided and shared with co-researchers as a way to continue to build rapport, nurturing Phase 1 of Teu le Vā (see Figure 12 TPAR artefact). The co-researchers were gifted a $100 Prezzy card gift voucher at the end of each talanoa session where we met more than once whereby the co-researchers' who attended one organised talanoa session received a mea'alofa of $50 out of appreciation of their time and contribution to this study. In addition, I sent a thank you email to each co-researcher expressing gratitude for their time and contribution to the study. Pertaining to cultural sensitivity and protocol, I greeted and thanked each co-researcher with their respective Pacific ethnic specific language. Given the empowerment agenda approach, co-researchers' stories are critical; thus, co-researchers are identified by their names throughout the thesis. Participant

consent was sought for this process throughout the duration of their talanoa session and when contacted during the data analysis phase of the research.

4.2.3. Interview Guide

For this research, the Fonofale framework was also used to identify specific topics that directly or indirectly influenced an individual's actions; these included lifestyle behaviours, nutrition and physical activity related behaviours, Pacific-specific ethnic culture, religiosity, public health information, the built environment and social influences. Accordingly, talanoa sessions (focus group and interview discussions) comprised six to ten key questions in search of the following themes; experiences with fruit- and vegetable-based entrepreneurship; their ideas, strategies. and actions for recommendations to increase fruit and vegetable eating in the political space; and general thoughts and feelings around healthy lifestyles (see Appendix E for schedule of questions).

4.3.4 Cultural Considerations

Upon reflection, both benefits and challenges arose from conducting this research. The benefits encompassed building trust and reciprocity within the community, allowing for open participation by the participants. However, challenges such as the impact of COVID-19, cultural sensitivity, gender dynamics, and methodological choices required thoughtful consideration and adaptation to ensure research process integrity and inclusivity. The following reflections underscore the complexity and dynamic nature of qualitative research within diverse and culturally rich contexts.

Visits to co-researchers' Home – Reciprocity in the Fa'aaloalo Sense

A notable benefit was the co-researchers' willingness to actively engage in the research. Their openness and participation allowed for rich and meaningful Talanoa, and their perspectives and storytelling contributed to a deeper understanding of themselves as individuals, their families, and community, particularly within the context of food, entrepreneurship, and health promotion.

Another significant benefit of the research process was the ability to be welcomed into their place of residence. Initially I was surprised at that the

opportunity to meet at their place of residence given past experiences of doing field research in the Fiji study (Conn et al., 2020) and the scoping study in South Auckland; Pacific youth entrepreneurs are often busy, so this was somewhat expected. This engagement allowed me to be accepted as a female member within the community. It reflects the concept of 'fa'aaloalo', which emphasises respect and reciprocity in Samoan culture. Further, through taking food for participants and their families and engaging in the gifting of 'mea'alofa' (gifts of appreciation), I fostered a sense of trust and mutual respect, strengthening researcher-participant relationships. This is common cultural practice across a variation of studies and given its cultural significance it highlighted how this cultural practice must remain a focal point when meeting Pacific peoples, for building strong relations with participants during and long after the research process.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented unforeseen challenges between me and the participants, including time constraints and busy schedules. For example, participants were unable to commit to talanoa sessions due to disruptions caused by the pandemic. This limitation highlighted the impact of external factors on the research process, necessitating flexibility and adaptation. Participants were given the opportunity to converse instead through online forums including Zoom and Microsoft Teams. Another notable challenge was my specific Samoan cultural lens. My cultural background and perspective are primarily Samoan, which I felt posed a challenge when catering to a diverse range of Pacific ethnic-specific groups within the study. Ensuring inclusivity and cultural sensitivity to all participants' backgrounds and experiences required careful navigation. Given my extensive experience in health promotion practice with a variety of Pacific peoples, I greeted participants in their native language and allowed them to express themselves freely in their native language. Further, email correspondence with participants always began with a Pacific ethnic specific greeting and farewell.

Gender dynamics within my research presented both challenges and opportunities for critical reflection. As a female researcher engaging with male participants, I was aware of the potential power differentials and

culturally embedded gender norms that could influence interactions and the sharing of knowledge (Anae et al., 2017). At the same time, my positionality allowed me to approach the research with sensitivity and relationality, which are epistemologically underpinned to Pacific ways of knowing and engaging, particularly through Talanoa (Sa'uLilo, 2016; Vaioleti, 2006). Being mindful of these characteristics helped me create a respectful and culturally responsive space, enabling the Pacific youth members to share their experiences authentically while ensuring the relational and ethical integrity of the research was maintained (Tamasese et al., 2005).

4.2.4. Data Analysis

In TPAR, participants as co-researchers play a key role in generating knowledge (data collection) and data analysis (Kemmis et al., 2014). The data collected, namely interview transcripts, written blogs, digital footage and images, formed the basis of co-created actions – refer to table 5 for details about the data collected. Observation and reflection processes are key to data analysis in that participatory groups consider what took place, and through a process of shared reflection consider what worked, what might be done differently. As with the earlier stages of TPAR, the process of data analysis was captured using methods that were acceptable to the group, such as visual and thematic mapping, or ranking of key points (shared determination of thematic or ranking frameworks). I was guided by Kemmis et al.'s (2014) 'Action Research Planner', with emphasis on a dominant-free paradigm. As a result, the research outputs included highly visual means of digital images, short videos, images, and words to reflect the views of the Pacific youth co-researchers through the TPAR model artefact.

Table 5

Data Sources Collected; Audio, Transcripts, Images, Vision Boards

Data Source	Collected From	Format	Quantity	Purpose/Use
Audio recordings	Talanoa sessions	Digital audio (MP3)	10 Microsoft word files	Verbatim transcription,
Written notes	Talanoa sessions	Researcher field notes	20 pages	Supplementary reflections
Vision boards	Talanoa sessions	Physical boards / photos	3 boards	Visual representation of youth aspirations
Photos	Talanoa sessions	JPEG images	15	Documenting process & artefacts

Data Source	Collected From	Format	Quantity	Purpose/Use
Drawings	Talanoa sessions	A4/A3 paper (scanned)	10	Illustrating business/health ideas
Research journal	Researcher reflections	Digital word document	1 Microsoft word document	Reflexivity, process evaluation

The data obtained from the interviews and focus groups were transcribed verbatim and imported into word transcription to be later used to extract key themes and sub-themes. NVivo is an effective research tool to code and collate data but, given the timely gaps between each talanoa session, transcripts were transcribed after each talanoa session and organised by themes and key questions in search of refining the key themes and sub-themes. Further, as a Samoan researcher, my engagement with this study is situated within the epistemological and ontological framework of the Fa‘a Sāmoa, which influenced the artefact, TPAR, for this research and encompasses values such as alofa (compassion), respect, reciprocity, service, and spirituality (Anae et al., 2001; Macpherson, 2002). These values are shared across other Pacific ethnic groups, including Tonga, Niue, and Fiji, although the ways in which they are practiced vary, with Samoa maintaining formal adherence to traditional protocols while other contexts, such as Niue, have seen modifications over time (Tamasese et al., 2005; Thaman, 1992). Despite these differences, these core values continue to underpin Pacific worldviews and inform culturally grounded approaches to knowledge generation.

I drew upon a Fa‘a Sāmoa lens, shaped by my cultural upbringing and professional experience with peoples of all ages, ethnicities, and backgrounds, nationally and internationally, especially Pacific peoples in health promotion, sport, and academic research settings, to implement a TPAR methodology, in this case, the artefact for this research. This dual lens allowed me to analyse data through positional reflexivity, critically reflecting on my own influence as a researcher, while privileging the voices of co-researchers. Thematic insights emerged from a combination of storytelling transcripts, collaborative mind mapping, field notes, and vision boards, ensuring that the analysis was culturally aligned, relationally grounded, and responsive to the lived experiences of Pacific youth health entrepreneurs (Conn et al., 2016; Vaioleti, 2006). Lastly, the choice between conducting focus groups and individual interviews introduced challenges related to data collection. Each method has its advantages and limitations, and I had to carefully consider which approach best suited the research objectives while addressing potential biases or limitations associated with either method.

Summary

In this chapter, I critically examined the methodological framework that guided the research, focusing on the integration of TPAR. I discussed the philosophical and theoretical foundations that informed my choices and justified the use of culturally grounded and collaborative methods as appropriate for engaging with Pacific youth health entrepreneurs. In Chapter Five, I provide a critical commentary on the research process; one of a three-part series to set the scene for corresponding chapters six and seven providing reflective insights into how TPAR, the artefact, was implemented in practice and its significance pertaining to capturing and illuminating the voices of Pacific youth within this research.

Chapter 5

Pacific youth inspirational stories

5.1. Introduction

This chapter seeks to answer the research question "What are the perceptions and strategies of Pacific youth in Auckland concerning fruit and vegetable-based enterprises?" The aim of this research was to explore how Pacific youth could be supported when developing Pacific: food enterprises. This chapter is the first in a sequence of three critical commentary chapters that collectively explore the process of this research, and the research findings responding to the research questions, leading to the production of an artefact; this artefact is, the use and development of a Talanoa Participatory Action Research approach developed through this research with Pacific youth in Auckland.

This chapter, Chapter five focuses on the implementation of the artefact process particularly examining and discussing phases one and two that of Teu le Vā nurturing the Vā, and talanoa storytelling, and presenting twelve inspirational stories shared by the co-researchers, offering insight into their lived experiences, motivations, challenges, and aspirations – refer to Figure 12 for the phase 1 of the artefact. Chapter six, building on their stories, critically further examines phases two and three, highlighting the co-researchers' strategies, ideas, and innovations aimed at promoting health, well-being, and entrepreneurial development within their communities. Chapter seven presents the reflections and sharing elements of the TPAR framework and considers how this has contributed to Samoan youth food and health entrepreneurship. I reflect on what worked, what was challenging, and what emerged in-between. I provide insights into how Talanoa and PAR can work together as a culturally safe, decolonising research tool especially in research related contexts with and for Pacific youth navigating health and entrepreneurship in Aotearoa New Zealand.

5.2. Research Aims and Objectives

The central research question guiding this study is:

How can Pacific youth in Auckland be supported to develop fruit and vegetable-based enterprises, and contribute to the health and wellbeing of Pacific communities?

With the following key research questions:

1) What is the current and contextual knowledge about Pacific peoples pertaining to Pacific-related NCDs, food patterns and the food system in Aotearoa New Zealand?

2) What are the perceptions and strategies of Pacific youth in Auckland concerning fruit and vegetable-based entrepreneurship?

3) How can Talanoa, guided by participatory action research principles, be used to amplify youth voices and support health-focused food strategies in Pacific communities?

This qualitative study aligns with the practice-led pathway three of AUT's PhD structure where the creation of an artefact forms a central component of the research (Auckland University of Technology, 2025, p101). With the use of Talanoa, and PAR and a Samoan researcher lens, this approach is enabled by and underpinned by a culturally grounded, participatory Pacific methodology that centres Pacific youth as co-creators of knowledge (Benninger, & O'Neill, 2024; Conn et al., 2016; Ofe-Grant et al., 2025) and draws on traditions of 'action research' to forefront future strategies (Conn et al., 2020; Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014; Vaioleti, 2006). According to Mila-Schaaf (2010) and Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea (2014), this reflects youth-led health and enterprise ideas, which are grounded in Pacific values and informed by lived experiences. This pathway supports ethical, relational, and decolonising research practices, promoting and empowering Pacific youth voices and it is my intension that this research allows their contributions to be visible, relevant, and impactful within and to inform academic, community, and policy contexts.

5.2.1. Participatory Action Research in Indigenous contexts

TPAR with Pacific communities embodies principles of mutuality, agency and transformation. During the current study, I engage with Pacific youth as co-researchers who share decision-making, reflecting an ethos of reciprocity and shared power. As Gerrard et al. (2025) emphasise, authentic collaboration "must truly reposition power to first nations peoples, engendering both respect and ownership" (Gerrard et al. 2025). In the current study, this means Pacific youth help set research questions, shape activities (for example, co-creating a model of healthy food entrepreneurship), and interpret findings. Lamont et al. (2020) similarly describe Pacific participatory research Fa'afaletui, as a collective process grounded in "reciprocity and relationships" (Lamont et al., 2020; Suaalii-Sauni, & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014). Practically, I draw on this by encouraging shared responsibility, for instance, by cooking and sharing a meal together as part of talanoa, a Pacific custom of care including in Samoa (Goodyear-Smith, & 'Ofanoa, 2022). Crucially, this participatory research incorporates stance of empowerment: for researchers, change comes when Indigenous peoples lead and embed their own knowledge in health systems (Gerrard et al., 2025). In line with the current study, I seek to provide new insightful data and empower Pacific youth as co-creators of solutions, challenging colonial patterns of outsider-led 'consultation'.

5.2.2. Fonofale and the concept of Vā

I frame Pacific youth health and entrepreneurship holistically using the Fonofale model (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001) – refer to Figure 4 for the Fonofale framework. This model uses the Samoan fale (house) as a metaphor: family (aiga) is the foundation, culture, values and beliefs form the roof, and the spiritual, physical, mental and other domains are the posts (Pulotu-Endemann, 2009). As Pulotu-Endemann argues, Pacific peoples identify family, culture and spirituality as the most important components of health. Thus, I consider that a youth's well-being (and by extension their capacity for food entrepreneurship) depends on these elements being in balance. Surrounding the house are the contextual components including time, environment and broader context such as recognising how history, socioeconomic factors and environment shape experiences (Pulotu-Endemann,

2009). For example, when I discuss healthy traditional foods or business ideas with the Pacific youth students, I pay attention to how family support (foundation) and cultural pride (roof) enable or hinder those plans.

Equally important is honouring the Samoan concept of vā – the relational "space between" people (Anae, 2010). Albert Wendt describes vā as that connective context which holds separate entities in unity (Anae, 2010; Wendt, 1996). In the current research, I deliberately teu le vā ("cherish" this space) by building trust and showing respect. This might involve beginning a talanoa session with a prayer or a respectful greeting, such as greeting Pacific youth in their respective ethnic greeting for example Meitaki Meiata is hello in Cook Islands, to acknowledge everyone's mana and role. By nurturing this vā, I ensured that relationships are maintained, which is fundamental in collectivist Pacific cultures. The Fonofale model together with vā reminds me that health and entrepreneurship are relational: they occur between people, their environments, and through time, not in isolation.

5.2.3. A critical decolonising lens

Viewed critically, TPAR explicitly resists extractive or colonial paradigms. Rather than surveying Pacific youth as objects (Conn et al. 2016; Flavell & Cunningham, 2022; Health research council, 2014), I centre their voices and knowledge as the foundation of the research. In our process, indigenous frameworks remain authoritative. As Suaalii-Sauni and Fulu-Aiolupotea (2014) argue, effective Pasifika research must "keep at the forefront a respect for cultural context and meaning" (p. 336) and this guided me to ensure all methods were culturally contextualised. For example, even when we use common tools like surveys or cooking workshops, we adapt them within the vā relational space so that participants steer the agenda. PAR becomes a form of self-determination: Pacific families co-create project outputs, and I explicitly credit them as co-authors on findings. This approach reflects calls from scholars to have Indigenous peoples as "architects" of change (Gerrard et al., 2025). Ultimately, by embedding talanoa dialogue, co-design partnership, Fonofale health framing and the ethical care of vā, I forefront Pacific epistemology within the study. I see my role not as extracting data but as a tapu (sacred) collaborator: upholding alofa (love) and fa'aaloalo (respect) at every step.

In this way, the methodology itself becomes an act of decolonisation. It positions Pacific youth and communities at the centre, their knowledge and voice leading the talanoa or the body of work for this research their well-being guiding the outcomes, thus breaking from the legacy of researchers studying Pacific people without their voice. In doing so, I honour Wendt's mandate to cherish the vā (Wendt, 1996) and Pulotu-Endemann's vision of wholeness (Pulotu-Endemann, 2009).

5.3. Artefact: Talanoa Participatory Action Research Approach

5.3.1. Phase 1: Teu le Vā – Nurturing the Vā

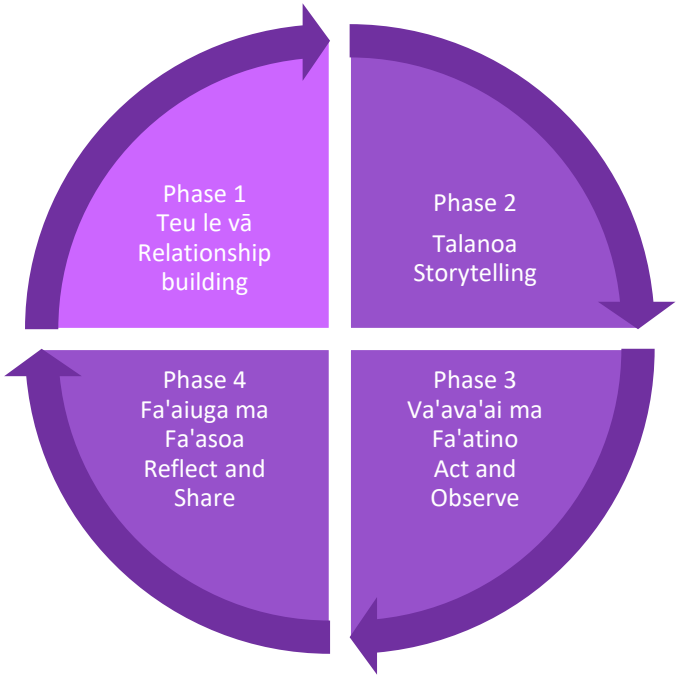
In Phase One of this research journey, the foundational work centred on teu le vā—a sacred, ethical, and culturally situated process of nurturing relationships with Pacific youth, their families, and communities – refer to Figure 12 for Phase one action cycle of the TPAR artefact. This phase served as the spiritual and preparatory space in which the research was carefully grounded before any formal data collection commenced. At the heart of teu le vā is the understanding that relationships are not incidental to research, they are central to the research (Anae, 2010). The concept of vā, a relational space between people, is an ontological and epistemological construct in many Pacific cultures, particularly in Samoan (Anae, 2010) and Tongan (Vaioleti, 2009) contexts , where the idea of maintaining and cherishing the vā is critical to community wellbeing and integrity (Anae, 2010; Mila-Schaaf & Hudson, 2009). In Samoan contexts, relationship building is fundamental to ethical and effective research engagement. Central to this is the concept of vā, often understood as the relational space that connects people, communities, and the spiritual world (Anae, 2016; Wendt, 1999). Rather than being an empty void, the vā is an active space that requires nurturing and respect through practices such as teu le vā (to cherish and maintain relationships). Within research, this means recognising participants not simply as data sources but as relational partners whose knowledge is interwoven with cultural, familial, and spiritual dimensions (Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014).

Building relationships in a Samoan context involves adhering to protocols of respect (fa'aaloalo), reciprocity (feagaiga), and collective responsibility, which guide the interactions between researcher and community (Vaioleti, 2006). Failure to respect these relational ethics risks undermining trust, damaging vā, and diminishing the

validity of findings. For Samoan youth in particular, relationship-centred approaches create safer spaces for dialogue, creativity, and co-construction of knowledge, aligning with Pacific research methodologies such as Talanoa and Participatory Action Research (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2012). Thus, prioritising relationship building not only honours cultural protocols but also strengthens the authenticity and impact of research outcomes.

Figure 12

Image of Phase 1 of the TPAR artefact – Phase 1 Focus



Before any engagement with Pacific youth could commence, I first secured formal ethical approval from the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 20th September 2020, (20/230). This was not simply a compliance exercise but a process that allowed me to articulate the relational, cultural, and methodological values underpinning the research (HRC, 2014). It required me to think critically about the potential challenges for example, power dynamics inherent in Pacific youth-focused research and to ensure that the talanoa processes would be conducted in a way that upheld the dignity, agency, and wellbeing of all participants, including myself as researcher. Once ethical approval was obtained, I began contacting key community stakeholders across the Auckland region, particularly in the South Auckland region, to

begin the delicate process of building trust and establishing meaningful relational ties that would support this research. I began by recruiting participants through a combination of purposive sampling—reaching out to youth I had worked with in previous Auckland studies—using snowball sampling (eliciting suggestions from those I approached purposively), alongside random selection moments of outreach in community settings. The individuals I sought were young Pacific entrepreneurs, primarily engaged in health, wellness, or food-based initiatives. Recruitment involved a relational process, initiated informally through text messages, phone calls, emails, and online platforms like Microsoft Teams. During these exchanges, I offered a brief outline of the study and invited participants to express interest. If they wished to participate, they were asked to nominate a suitable time and venue for the formal talanoa. This informal engagement stage unfolded over two to three weeks and aligned with my earlier distinction between formal and informal talanoa, as explored in Chapter three.

Teu le vā is a Samoan term which essentially means ‘Teu’ (nurture) and ‘le vā’ means relationships (Anae, 2008). In the context of this body of research context involved more than introductory meetings, it meant approaching elders, youth leaders, faifea’u (Reverands/pastors), and community organisers with humility and cultural sensitivity. Initially, my plan had been to undertake a tri-Pacific nation research design, involving talanoa in Samoa, Fiji, and New Zealand. I had envisioned forming an advisory group comprising respected matai, Samoan youth leaders, council representatives, and church leaders to guide the Samoa-based portion of the project. However, the disruption caused by COVID-19 significantly altered these plans. International border closures and shifting public health priorities made it impossible to proceed with fieldwork in Samoa and Fiji. As a result, with regular meetings, talanoa and the support of my academic supervisors, I made the decision to refocus the project solely within Aotearoa New Zealand, particularly among mainly Samoan and broader Pacific communities in Auckland.

This redirection, while disappointing at first given my genealogical ties to Samoa, became an opportunity to deepen my local community engagement. With the support of my academic supervisors, I adapted the original study design while retaining the methodological integrity of talanoa and PAR. We ensured that the same research questions, data collection methods, and ethical protocols were upheld, providing

continuity and coherence in the research focus. My previous experience working with youth from a range of Pacific communities in Aotearoa became a strength, allowing me to navigate community spaces with insight and familiarity.

The Samoan concept of vā fealoa'i, vā feavata'i which means emphasising respect, honour, and reciprocity in interpersonal relationships (Anae, 2010), guided every engagement I undertook during this phase. This term reflects the cultural obligation to maintain balance in social relations, particularly when engaging with elders or those with chiefly authority. In practical terms, this meant taking care to observe proper protocols when entering community spaces, using appropriate language, offering gifts or food when appropriate, and acknowledging the leadership roles of community members. It also meant being attuned to the emotional and spiritual dynamics present during conversations—knowing when to speak, when to listen, and how to navigate difficult or sacred topics with care. In my positionality, in chapter four, I speak of being Samoan and my upbringing had significant impact on who I am, so I weaved these notions or practice shown here in theory but from my own personal experience as a Samoan and a Pacific researcher in the sport, exercise and health space. For me, reflecting on identity means asking what it is to be Samoan, rather than only identifying as broadly Pacific, therefore it is important that I embody this Samoan lens which lends itself to the wider Pacific fabric of this research. While a broad Pacific identity definition offers solidarity and highlights our shared struggles and aspirations, I feel it can sometimes blur the depth of my Samoan culture. Holding on to being Samoan matters because it preserves my language, traditions, and values that guide how I conduct this research. At the same time, being part of the wider Pacific community gives strength through unity and collaboration and so I believe it is important to carry both identities to safeguard and preserve the mana, tapu or sacred space this research has as Pacific. Artefacts honour each culture's authenticity while celebrating collective belonging, in the context of this research the artefact embodies these set values.

During this phase, I also made a clear distinction between formal and informal Talanoa. In terms of formal and informal talanoa, I am drawing not only on my own experiences as a Samoan but also on understandings rooted in Pacific contexts. For me, "formal" often reflects structured gatherings such as fono, village meetings, or church assemblies, where hierarchy, protocols, and respect for leadership are central (Anae,

2016; Lilomaiava-Doktor, 2009). “Informal,” on the other hand, connects to everyday talanoa with family, peers, and friends, where conversations are fluid, relational, and less bound by rigid structure (Vaioleti, 2006). These distinctions are not just my invention; they mirror the multiple layers of Samoan social life, where both formal and informal interactions shape knowledge-sharing and decision-making.

Formal talanoa took place during organised workshops or meetings, often with agendas and clear objectives. These spaces allowed for the collective exploration of entrepreneurship, health, and wellbeing, and involved structured facilitation and note-taking. Informal talanoa, on the other hand, happened in everyday spaces, over meals, during car rides, or in casual conversations after church. These moments, though less structured, were just as important, if not more so, in building the relational trust that underpinned the entire research process. As Vaioleti (2006) argues, talanoa is not simply a method for extracting data; it is a relational practice that allows participants in research contexts to share truth in their own time and terms.

Typically, and traditionally within Pacific contexts elders are seen as well-regarded respected peoples whereby the talanoa conducted between the elder and the other individual (either an adult, young adult or child) is often formal given their status within their fanau, aiga, and wider communities (Sa’u Lilo, 2021). In the context of this research, talanoa was conducted using both forms of talanoa formal and formally. As Vaioleti (2006) argues, talanoa is not merely a method for extracting data; it is a relational practice that allows participants to share their truths on their own terms and in their own time. Fa’avae, Manu, and Morris (2016) highlight that talanoa provides a culturally grounded space for dialogue that is respectful, reciprocal, and rooted in Pacific relationality, enabling participants to engage authentically. Similarly, Fa’avae, Macfarlane, and Cookson (2016) describe talanoa as a decolonizing methodology that challenges conventional Western research paradigms by centering Pacific ways of knowing, allowing knowledge to be co-constructed in ways that honour participants’ experiences and cultural values. Johansson-Fua (2013) also emphasizes that talanoa facilitates open, respectful dialogue, where participants are empowered to share their perspectives in culturally meaningful ways. More recently, Gremillion, Hallie, and Tominiko (2021) underline that talanoa is not just a data collection tool but a process for building genuine relationships between researcher and participant, fostering trust and

authentic storytelling. Collectively, these scholars reinforce Vaioleti's assertion that talanoa prioritises relationality and participant agency. It is a methodology that recognises the importance of timing, context, and cultural norms, ensuring that research is not extractive but collaborative and respectful. By situating participants as active contributors rather than passive subjects, talanoa embodies a research practice that is ethical, culturally responsive, and grounded in Pacific epistemologies.

Of course, nurturing these relationships required time and emotional labour. The process was inherently slow, requiring patience and flexibility. There were times when institutional timelines clashed with the pace of community engagement. For example, one of the co-researchers postponed our talanoa at the last minute due to family commitments, or the passing of a church member would lead to several weeks of mourning and social support, delaying scheduled talanoa sessions. These disruptions were not setbacks, but rather reflections of the relational realities of Pacific life; with the Pacific youth having many different roles to undertake in their families and communities. It reminded me that this research had to remain accountable to Pacific worldviews and not impose rigid academic structures on relational processes. Maintaining multiple relational spaces simultaneously also led to moments of relational fatigue. The emotional labour of consistently being present, culturally responsive, and open to others' needs—while also managing administrative, ethical, and institutional responsibilities—was taxing at times. However, these challenges were integral to the work of teu le vā. As a Pacific researcher, I was not an outsider collecting information but upholding the responsibilities of service, reciprocity, and cultural continuity.

Reflecting on this first phase, I recognise how profoundly it shaped my positionality as a researcher. Rather than situating myself as a neutral observer, I acknowledged my role as an active individual within the vā. My accountability extended not only to the university but also to the families and young people who trusted me with their stories. This phase reminded me that research is a long-term commitment, not a temporary project. As Wendt (1996) reminds us, the vā must be actively maintained, it cannot be assumed or taken for granted. By investing in teu le vā as a methodological foundation, I laid the groundwork for a research process that was ethical, culturally grounded, and community centred. It ensured that every subsequent phase—was carried out in alignment with the values, rhythms, and aspirations of Pacific

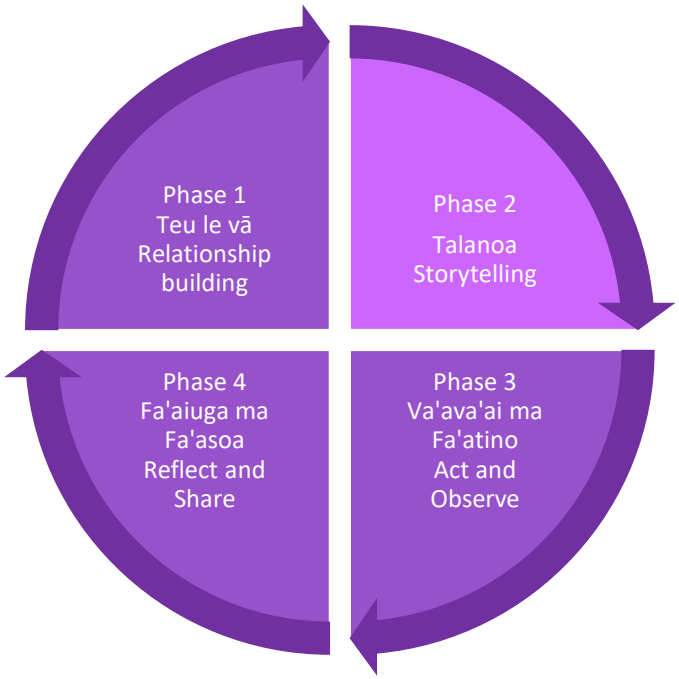
youth and their families. In this way, teu le vā was not simply a preparatory step; it was the ethical heart of the research.

5.3.2. Phase 2: Talanoa – Storytelling and Deep Dialogue

Following the formal ethics approval process, I entered Phase Two of the research, centred around talanoa—a dialogic, relational method rooted in Pacific storytelling traditions. Talanoa provided the epistemological space through which participants' narratives were shared, shaped, and interpreted. As articulated by Vaioleti (2006), talanoa is more than a method; it is a culturally grounded philosophy of communication that prioritises openness, mutual respect, and relational depth. In this phase, my focus shifted to collecting data through co-constructed dialogue, with an emphasis on centring participants' lived experiences as knowledge and resisting any form of extractive research practice.

Figure 13

Image of TPAR Artefact – Phase 2 Focus



The commencement of this phase marked the beginning of phase 2: Talanoa – Storytelling and Design – see Figure 13 above.

The initial formal talanoa session served as an extension of the established relationship from our first initial interactions or the teu le vā phase. Given this was the initial meeting and where the depth of their storytelling requires engagement this talanoa needed to be formal. These meetings were held in a variety of settings, depending on what felt most comfortable and culturally appropriate to participants, ranging from local cafes to community centres and online platforms. Each session began and ended with a lotu (prayer) which I offered as a sign of respect and alignment with Pacific values. This ritual practice was not only spiritual but also served to frame the talanoa within a culturally safe and sacred space (Fa'avae et al., 2016). In the first talanoa session, we focused on getting to know one another and establishing trust. The co-researchers were invited to share their personal backgrounds, their aspirations, and how they came to engage in food and health-related entrepreneurship. These sessions were fluid and participant-led, with each individual's journey unfolding at its own pace.

The process intentionally avoided structured questionnaires or rigid interview protocols. Instead, I allowed the conversations to flow naturally, following the rhythms and cues of each participant, in keeping with the Talanoa approach. This approach facilitated a more open and trusting dynamic, equalising power relations between myself as a researcher and the youth as co-creators of knowledge. The second round of talanoa deepened our engagement, shifting towards storytelling. I asked each co-researcher to expand on their enterprise ideas, motivations, and experiences in navigating Pacific health and well-being spaces. These narratives often touched on challenges they faced in their communities, such as food insecurity, intergenerational health issues, and access to culturally appropriate support. In some cases, they shared their involvement in health organisations, such as the Heart Foundation, providing further context to their entrepreneurial visions. The richness of these talanoaga, provided powerful insights into how health innovation could emerge from youth-led, culturally grounded spaces. While my initial plan included four individual talanoa sessions with each participant, time constraints and institutional deadlines required some adaptation. In several cases, I consolidated the planned four sessions into two longer indepth discussions. For example, with co-researchers Theresa, Etienne and Alex we met on two or more occasions to complete the talanoa sessions. Conversely, the two focus groups were held as single-day gatherings, condensing all thematic areas into one longer workshop due to participants' availability. Although this adjustment compressed

the engagement timeframe, I remained committed to upholding the talanoa ethos—ensuring the space remained participant-driven, dialogic, and relationally grounded (Cammock et al. 2021; Vaioleti, 2016). In total, I facilitated ten talanoa sessions with the co-researchers, two focus groups—one with three Heart Foundation Pacific Heartbeat staff and another with six AUT Sport and Recreation students—and three individual talanoa sessions, some held on more than one occasion.

5.3.3. TPAR nuances in practice

This phase was not without its challenges. At times, managing silences within the dialogue required patience. In Pacific contexts, silence can signal reflection, discomfort, or deep emotion (Fa'avae et al., 2020; Manu'atu, 2000; Nanai, 2023). As a facilitator, I had to learn to sit with these silences without rushing to fill them. Other difficulties included the emotional weight of some narratives—particularly when the co-researchers shared stories of their life achievements, loss, family pressure, or systemic barriers they had encountered. In a few instances during the talanoa sessions, the co-researchers shared more than they had originally intended, and the depth of their story moved them to tears, so I had to reflect on the ethics of care and how best to honour their story while safeguarding their wellbeing. These moments reminded me that talanoa, while empowering, demands a high degree of emotional sensitivity and ethical reflexivity.

A critical aspect of this phase was power sharing. By positioning myself not as an expert extracting data but as a collaborator listening to and learning from the experiences of youth, I sought to foster an equitable research environment. Participants were not subjects of the research—they were co-researchers whose perspectives actively shaped the emerging themes and interpretations. It is also important to note that TPAR is not a single, uniform approach. For example, a Samoan lens may draw on Fa'a Samoa and fono structures (Anae, 2010; Pulotu Endemann, 2009), while a Fijian perspective may emphasise veiwekani (relationships) (Conn et al., 2020) or vanua (connection to land and people) (Nabobo-Baba, 2008). These distinctions matter because they preserve cultural authenticity and resist Pacific generalisations, while also recognising common threads of relationality, respect, and as a collective that unite Pacific research approaches. Through talanoa, data emerged not as disembodied facts,

but as vital inspirational stories embedded in lived experience, shaped by culture, memory, and collective identity. Each story provided an avenue into the participant's world, revealing how entrepreneurship, health, and Pacific values intersected in their lives. The talanoa process itself became both a method of data collection and a form of transformational dialogue—empowering youth to reflect critically on their journeys while also contributing meaningfully to the research design. In reflection, this phase reaffirmed my belief in TPAR as a powerful methodological tool, one that honours Indigenous knowledge systems and enables Pacific youth to speak in their own voices, on their own terms. The ethics of care, trust, and relationality that underpinned these conversations were not supplementary to the research, they were 'the research'., TPAR in this sense, was not just a method but a methodology of hope and healing.

5.4. Introducing the 12 Pacific Youth

5.4.1. Co-researcher profiles and context

This section draws on the voices and experiences of twelve Pacific youth entrepreneurs residing in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand, whose food and health-based enterprises reflect diverse cultural backgrounds and innovative approaches to wellbeing – refer to table 6 for a detailed display of the Pacific youth demographics and background information. Their enterprise ideas were equally diverse, spanning digital platforms, locally produced food and beverage initiatives, as well as culturally rooted in health education programmes, and community capacity-building projects aimed at improving nutrition and reducing food waste. These ideas are explored in detail in chapter six of this thesis.

Each co-researcher brought a unique perspective shaped by their upbringing, community networks, cultural knowledge, and professional or educational backgrounds. Some were emerging leaders in their late teens fresh out of high school, building their ventures while navigating tertiary studies, while others were more established in their entrepreneurial journey, combining years of community work with a passion for giving back to their communities especially the Pacific. Several had lived experiences of food insecurity or chronic illness in their families, which became a catalyst for their entrepreneurial ideas. Their motivations, while varied, were united by a shared desire to

serve their communities, strengthen family wellbeing, and reclaim Pacific values around food, health, and collective prosperity.

The types of enterprises discussed reflected a wide range of innovation. Some co-researchers developed social media-based businesses, using platforms such as Instagram, and Facebook to educate Pacific communities about healthy eating and culturally appropriate meal preparation. Others created digital food applications designed to help users identify nutritious options and incorporate Pacific produce into their daily meals. Another idea from the co-researchers was to create a fruit and vegetable subscription service, often sourced from backyard gardens, urban farms, or local growers, reflecting an interest in sustainability and reconnecting with traditional food systems. A smaller group focused on health and wellbeing education initiatives, using culturally responsive approaches to deliver workshops, online content, and school-based programmes targeting Pacific youth and families to increase fruit and vegetable intake to promote good health outcomes.

What emerged strongly across their inspirational stories was that these Pacific youth including those who are well established entrepreneurs are not simply economic actors, they are individuals of cultural renewal and community transformation, so much so they positioned their work not only as a business venture but as a form of service to their aiga/whānau, families and broader Pacific communities. Their efforts were driven by a commitment to restoring healthier food habits, addressing rising rates of lifestyle-related illnesses, and countering the effects of structural inequities in health access and food systems. They demonstrated a strong sense of intergenerational responsibility, often referencing elders, ancestors, or future generations as inspiration for their work. This chapter honours the diversity of these twelve Pacific youth who bring new insights to health and wellbeing and entrepreneurship. By embedding their entrepreneurial perspectives in practice in cultural values, social accountability, and health promotion, they provide powerful alternatives to dominant models of business and wellbeing. Their stories reflect a collective aspiration: to reclaim Pacific knowledges, reimagine futures of health and prosperity, and inspire other young peoples including Pacific youth that they too can do the same. The following section showcases insight on each of the 12 Pacific youth co-researchers involved in this research. With the support of my academic supervisors, given this study uses talanoa storytelling to underpin this research, I

decided to use the same approach to showcase their stories with integrating first person narrative to their shared talanoa storytelling. Their inspirational stories are showcased below.

Table 6

Demographics of the co-researchers –Pacific youth

Co-researcher Profiles								
No.	**Name**	**Ethnicity**	**Age**	**Gender**	**Stage of Entrepreneurship**	**Name of Business**	**Role**	**Type of Enterprise / Interest Area**
1	Theresa	Samoan	38	F	2017	Nesian Bites & Sia Moana	CEO	Operates a dual business of culturally inspired food platters and handcrafted Pacific jewellery, showcasing traditional artistry while catering to modern events and gatherings
2	Etienne	Tongan	45	M	Start-up phase	Pacific Meal Kits: First Kai	CEO	Founder of a Tongan food meal kit service with ready-to-cook ingredients and recipes, to preserve traditional cuisine while meeting modern convenience needs.

3	Iunisi	Tongan	19	F	Interested	–	–	Passionate about and exploring opportunities in sport, health, and well-being enterprises
4	PJ	Samoan	18	M	Interested	–	–	Passionate about and exploring opportunities in sport, health, and well-being enterprises
5	Meana	Cook Island	18	F	Interested	–	–	Enthusiastic about future ventures in sport, health, and well-being.
6	Rosa	Samoan	18	F	2021	Triple T Trading	Co-facilitator; Social media role	Passionate about nutrition, fitness and health and helps with a traditional Samoan family food-based business
7	DC	Samoan	19	M	Interested	–	–	Passionate about sport health, wellbeing and interested in transforming this into an enterprise
8	Julia	Samoan	18	F	Interested	–	–	Interested in sport, health, and well-being and entrepreneurship
9	Alexandria	Samoan	37	F	Aspiring entrepreneur	-	–	Aims to establish a health and wellness business catering to mothers and babies, integrating

								Pacific cultural approaches to maternal and child health.
10	Freda	Tongan	40	F	Interested	–	–	Interested in developing projects around heart health and nutrition, particularly addressing Pacific community dietary needs and preventive health education.
11	Kokoi	Kiribati	41	F	Entrepreneur	Celebrate with Home Bakes	CEO	Home-based baking business specialising in cakes, muffins, and cupcakes, while integrating health-conscious recipes to promote heart health and nutrition awareness.
12	Tampy	Samoan	50	M	Interested	–	–	Passionate about heart health and nutrition initiatives, with a vision to provide community education and resources to improve dietary habits.

5.4.2. Theresa – Everything she touches turns to Gold

Theresa, a world-renowned food artist and owner of Nesian Bites Ltd, is widely celebrated for her intricately curated grazing tables and her Polynesian-inspired jewellery line, which features earrings crafted from traditional materials such as shells and frangipani flowers – see image below Figure 14 for an image of Theresa. Her passion and drive stems from her family she started back a few years around 2017 and has immersed herself in her business endeavour ever since. The idea came about when she was in her home and inspired from making her son healthy lunches for school in a creative manner then would post her idea on Instagram. She describes this as such

> *"Before I went to work in the morning because my mum stayed with my son at home before I took him to preschool before I went to work in the morning, I used to do small platters for him [my son] so or have all the nutrients that he needed throughout the day and I uploaded it to my Instagram story. I did a fruit platter. With his, sandwiches and his snacks, and I uploaded it to my Instagram stories, and I did that on a regular like, you know, Have a good day, son. I'll do a caption. Have a good day, son, and do your and do your platter".*

She went on to say that her family picked up on it and wanted to see it on a larger scale and even started asking for pricing so they could begin ordering platters of their own she said

> *"And my family picked up on it and I think it was a birthday, one of my cousins daughter's birthday they said to me, can you do that but on a bigger scale, like, can you do a big platter and bring it for the table for the kids table? So, I was like yeah sure, I'll do it… so I went and brought up a platter…did it…took it to this birthday party and everyone just came and took pictures of it. They were like, wow, this is amazing and I didn't think anything of it, because I was just like, oh, that's what I do at home, oh yeah, nothing much and then people started sharing it on Instagram and then family members will just ask me on the regular like, oh, can you do us a platter for this weekend? Can you bring a platter for me? And so, I started adding the Samoan twist to it. I started adding the coconuts…he pork buns. I started adding the voice to it. And then my family members said, I think it was one of my aunties, she called me one day and she said, hey, my friend from work would like a platter.*

How much would you charge if you were to do one? And I was like, what? and it started from there" (Theresa).

It is clear from a modest perspective she perceived her passions and her own creativity as a place to be a casual daily internalised passion, for what she for her, for the home but was surprised that there were people in society who took a liking to her creativity when taking a visual of her idea. She further elaborated *"...Just my passion in life is creating. I love the creating process. I just create anything and everything and I'm happy. I love creating. I call myself a food artist…" (Theresa).* She comes from a lineage of entrepreneurial excellence, having been raised in a family of ambitious, hardworking individuals. *"OK, so she's definitely my #1 motivator. Yeah, it's her".* Her extended family includes a professor at the National University of Samoa, alongside a long line of entrepreneurs, uncles, aunties, and grandparents, from Samoa and Aotearoa New Zealand who have modelled generational knowledge and self-determined enterprise. Drawing inspiration from both her aiga's legacy and her own creative passion, she has carved a path that honours ancestral traditions while embracing modern business practices. It is evident that entrepreneurship is deeply embedded in her identity, arguably inherited both genetically and culturally. She goes on to say *"Yeah, I think just the thought of like our parents migrating here for a better future for us feels like, you know, that makes me want to do better. Do you know what I mean? Like, not just your average Joe, but yeah, make better use of the opportunity that we've been given here".* In figure 13 is an image of Theresa putting her food artistry skills to work by showcasing healthy food items including the creation of healthy wraps which includes fresh salad mix of green leafy vegetables and carrots, some tuna, wrapped in low carb wheat meal wraps with a set of fresh oranges and grapes are displayed perfectly on the bench with her signature business logo signage.

Figure 14

Image of Theresa in her home kitchen

Note: “This image was selected to visually represent engagement in healthy food practices during the Phase 4 talanoa session. Own photo.

She humbly states:

“*Family and God. [My] Motivation is my mom…she's definitely my #1 motivator. Yeah, it's her. I think the legacy of sacrifices, something that fills me because I know that she's had to sacrifice a lot to, to migrate here. It's her and my grandparents, you know, they've had to sacrifice a lot to migrate here and it's important”*

Her business journey was further supported by her involvement in The Kitchen Project, an Aotearoa-based initiative designed to provide aspiring entrepreneurs with the resources and guidance needed to grow sustainable food businesses that serve local communities. Her entrepreneurial philosophy is shaped by her faith in God, her commitment to her family, and her personal drive. She views education as a key

mechanism for empowerment—not only for herself but also for others. In the domestic space, her role as a mother becomes central to her educational practice, as she intentionally integrates healthy food choices into her children's school lunches and daily meals to foster long-term wellbeing.

Figure 15

Image of Nesian Bites Instagram post of her grazing table; Fresh fruit and coconut

Note: *Instagram image of example grazing table used for Theresa's functions she caters to.*

Her approach to community education is primarily visual and digital, using social media platforms to share images and videos of her completed catering events – see image Figure 14 above of one of her grazing tables at an event posted on her Nesian Bites Instagram page. By posting silent, visually rich scans of her food displays, particularly her signature grazing tables, she engages in a culturally nuanced form of knowledge transmission. This silent, observational style reflects a distinctly Samoan mode of learning: one grounded in quiet attentiveness, respect, and embodied action.

Figure 16

Image of final display from food artist Theresa

Note: Creative stunning display of Theresa's food artistry of making the healthy wholemeal with tuna and vegetables wrap, fruits and carefully cut coconut and mango, decorated with items of her grazing table business. Own photo

Through these images, she teaches without words, inviting others to learn by watching and interpreting, a pedagogical approach that mirrors traditional Samoan practices – see above image Figure 16 of a homemade version of her creative food artistry. I discuss this concept of nuanced silence further in the next phase of the artefact, particularly as it relates to Phase four of the artefact process. Theresa is a successful entrepreneur who has navigated both the rewards and challenges of building a sustainable business rooted in her passion for food and creativity. One of the most significant obstacles she has faced is securing consistent funding and access to resources, which are often limited and tied to complex application processes that require long waiting periods and uncertain outcomes. Despite these barriers, Theresa approaches her entrepreneurial journey with resilience, accepting setbacks with grace

while maintaining a strong digital presence and drawing strength from her family and mindset. Looking ahead, her long-term aspiration is to establish a dedicated commercial kitchen to expand her Nesian Bites business. She remains committed to continuing her work with communities across Auckland and wider Aotearoa, with the goal of contributing meaningfully to Pacific food and health initiatives. This theme is further explored in chapter six of this thesis.

5.4.3. Etienne – First Kai meal kits

Etienne is an emerging Tongan entrepreneur and an academic based at Auckland University of Technology (AUT), where he is currently completing his master's degree in the School of Business. His entrepreneurial vision centres on promoting and educating others about Tongan cuisine—an idea deeply rooted in his cultural values, personal goals, and passion for food. He believes Tongan food should be more widely recognised for its rich historical significance, cultural importance, and potential health benefits. This concept has evolved into a business idea: culturally meaningful and educational Pacific kai meal kits designed to increase awareness and accessibility of traditional Tongan food.

> *"Love of food, passion of food and interest in business just made it easy for me to, look at that as a way of continuing my love of food and family and continue that [in] the bigger, wider world. So, I know that, it's much easier to create a business in New Zealand because it's just so simple, you just get on [online], pay a few fees, and you start your business, but the big part of it is having that idea and that passion to continue to, you know, follow through with your idea as an aspiring business owner or entrepreneur or whatever [it is you decide to pursue]" (Etienne).*

Etienne's initiative has been further supported by AUT's Co-Starters enterprise programme, which provides mentorship and guidance for early-stage entrepreneurs. His ambition is to build a venture that not only offers culturally inspired products but also strengthens Pacific identity and community wellbeing. To advance this goal, Etienne is actively engaging with key stakeholders, including chef Robert Oliver from the Pacific Island Food Revolution, as part of his broader networking and development efforts. In addition to planning and development, he maintains a reflective blog to document his entrepreneurial journey. His blog talks about what he intends to do for the day, and

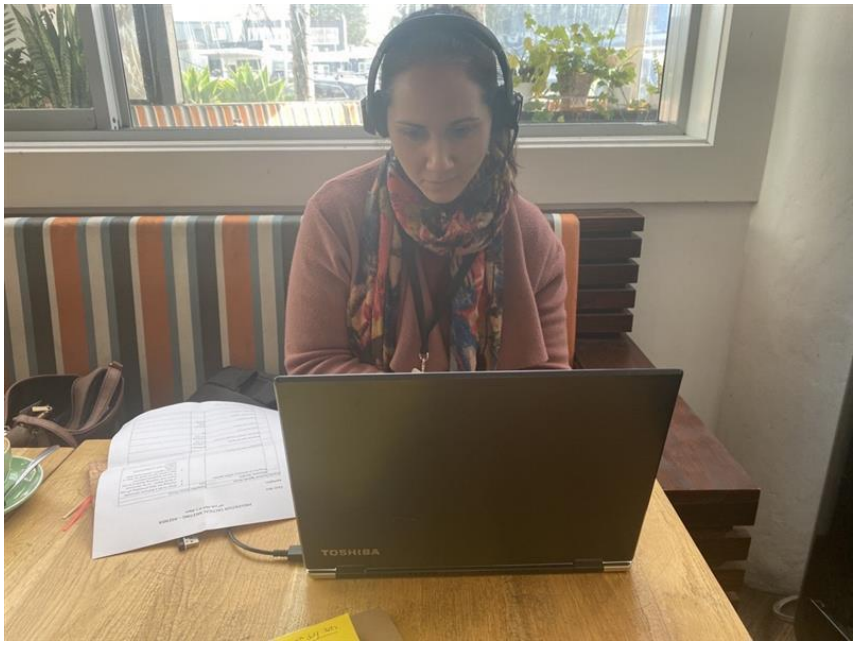
being in the mind of an aspiring entrepreneur and the thought process behind daily activities over a 2-week period addressing the steps needed to think about to go about their daily activities. Key points included deep thought process reflecting his passion and desire to address food, health, family, the internal challenges he needed to overcome and self-talk to self-motivate himself. Inspired by his family and guided by a strong sense of cultural responsibility, Etienne is determined to bring his vision to life and create a practical, accessible platform that celebrates Pacific food heritage for wider Aotearoa and global audiences.

5.4.4. Alex – Health and Wellness business for mums and bubs

Alex brings to her entrepreneurial and professional journey a deep sense of purpose grounded in her faith in God, and unwavering support from her husband and two children – see image below Figure 17 of Alex. Her personal and professional identity is shaped by a strong foundation in sport and health, which she pursued through formal academic study at AUT graduating from a Bachelor of Sport and Recreation degree. This background has led her to a leadership role as a registered nutritionist and the Pacific Heartbeat Team Manager at the Heart Foundation, where she applies her knowledge and skills in culturally relevant and impactful ways.

Figure 17

Image of Alex during talanoa session



Note: Image of Alex busy conducting a meeting with her team at our second Talanoa session. Own photo

Her work is not only professionally fulfilling but personally aligned with her passion for improving the health and wellbeing of Pacific peoples. She recognises the urgency of addressing the disproportionate burden of chronic diseases in Pacific communities and advocates for more efficient, targeted, and culturally tailored interventions. Through her current professional role, she actively promotes the use of food as a powerful tool for both prevention and management of NCDs. Although, her commitment extends beyond her professional duties, she consciously integrates her nutritional knowledge into her everyday life, setting a strong example within her family and community.

Another important theme is to recognise that these Pacific youth members are contributing to societal issues on a daily. Given her background in nutrition and health she is determined to begin but has her skepticisms she says "*I have been humming and harring about starting something on my own after this that would to more studies but we will see, yeah"* As she continued on this journey she found that there is a gap in the health space for lack of education for new mothers. As an experienced mother reflecting on her time as a new mother, she remembers not having much support about what to feed her newborn, which healthy snacks to choose from and understood the significance of good nutrition for your children especially at infant age. She then understands the significant risks associated with starting your own business especially when you need to care for your family, that it's not easy

> *"Yeah, we'll see its tough in these times you've gotta pay the bills and pay the mortgage and without a job you know…. so yeah, it's a big ask to step away and actually do something on my own but it's been on the cards for a long time now so we'll see how it goes (Alex).*

Her story reflects not only a successful career trajectory but also a deeply rooted commitment to empowering society in general particularly new mothers through food, education, and wellbeing. As such she is interested in entrepreneurial concept of a health and wellness business specialising in caring for mums and their bubs. This idea stemmed from her family as well as the need for mums to be better equipped as mums as well as their children and fanau and/or aiga as a whole. She emphasised this during our initial talanoa session via teams and said:

"My vision is to have a space, a safe space for our people to come and be educated on health and well being, so it's tailoring the messages and the education piece that will come with that business to our people. You know, so that they resonate with that education piece and what works for Pacific is, you know, both Pacific by Pacific" (Alex).

Although she realises the challenges that come with supporting this type of an enterprise as a Pacific person and acknowledges this as a serious concern if the enterprise were to be implemented. She continues on to say

"*So really believe that, you know, being a Pacific Islander or being a Samoan woman that's starting a business for our Pacific people, that in itself can be a drill card because, you know, people love to support, we love to support our own people and we love we feel kind of more drawn to our people as opposed to it being. I'm part of a known Pacific business, if that makes sense and other benefits would be (Alex).*

Thus, she feels a lack of motivation and cautiously is aware of this knowledge with the potential constraints in the entrepreneurial space and goes onto say

"Obviously I'm having the options of and being exposed to healthy options, whether it's through education, whether it's through, like, whether it was a business that provided healthy options in ways of, you know, nutrition and food and it all comes with the ability for our people to go and action the change if that makes sense or create a behaviour for them to be able to make a change in ways of nutrition and food, so for example, I'm thinking you know if I'm if the business was around, providing healthier meals and with options that resonate with our people and that are affordable, that will give them the tools or that will give them a kind of a pathway to actually try and make that change" (Alex).

By combining scientific expertise with cultural understanding, she demonstrates a holistic approach to health promotion that is grounded in Pacific values and responsive to the realities faced by her community. Her work exemplifies the importance of culturally competent leadership in the public health sector, where the intersection of evidence-based practice and cultural knowledge can drive meaningful

and sustainable outcomes. It is Alexs hope that one day she would be able to have her own career in this space but only time will tell.

5.4.5. Freda – Strong believer in leading a healthful lifestyle

Freda's journey into the field of nutrition and health promotion began during high school, where her involvement with family and hanging out with family including watching them play rugby team alongside her cousins sparked an interest in physical activity and overall wellbeing. "*Now I'm in a role where I can think about what I want to get in life and helping people whether it be through nutrition, health, anyway, to kind of better [improve] their health….It's just focused on how I can do this job as best I can to the communities and hopefully continue with my personal journey and fitness and health" (Freda).* Her early experiences with sport led her to pursue further learning, including participation in the Certificate in Pacific Nutrition (CPN) course offered by AUT. This foundation inspired her to study nutrition at Massey University, where she explored the complexities of food diaries, family dynamics, and the importance of building trust and rapport when working within Pacific communities. Despite facing personal and family challenges during her studies, she persisted and successfully completed her degree. Her motivation to enter the health field is deeply rooted in her own Pacific heritage and the impact of chronic diseases—particularly heart disease—within her community. She notes the devastating reality that many Pacific individuals aged 30 to 65 suffer sudden deaths, leaving behind families and becoming mere memories "*Oh man…it's too close to home, and I thought when people pass away, it's just heartbreaking" (Freda)*. These experiences brought urgency and personal meaning to her career path and continues to. After graduating and entering the job market during the COVID-19 pandemic, a timely opportunity arose through a friend who informed her about a role with the Pacific Heartbeat team at the Heart Foundation. She applied and has been contributing to the organisation's work ever since. Her work focuses on both prevention and management of NCDs. She promotes regular physical activity, healthy eating, and broader health and wellbeing education tailored for Pacific peoples. One of her proposed initiatives involves supermarket incentives—providing vouchers or cards that enable families to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables more affordably. Her vision is long-term: to remain in this space until she sees a measurable decline in chronic disease rates within Pacific communities, with the ultimate goal of eradicating preventable illness through culturally grounded solutions she emphasised "*Timing was*

good, now I can help people whether it be nutrition and health, how can I do my job best I can – my own personal journey (Freda). She expands on this idea as a potential enterprise lens with the creation of a subsidised card to use specifically for fruits and vegetables further explained in detail in the next chapter, Chapter six.

5.4.6. Kokoi – Dedicated mother to her family through healthy living

With strong genealogical ties to Kiribati, Kokoi moved to Auckland in 2003 with her husband shortly after their wedding. Raised in a traditional family, she is now a mother of four children, all of whom were in school by the time she began exploring new pathways for personal and professional development. *I moved here 2003 with my family and living here (in Auckland) ever since. My mom and dad, they're back home with my siblings, so I'm the only one from the family (living here) [Kokoi].*

With her husband in full-time employment and strong support from extended family, she began considering how she might also contribute more meaningfully to the household and community, while still maintaining her central role as a caregiver. "*…Full time employment. When that day comes, but prior to this role I worked as a budget advisor and that was really helpful for us as a family because I sort of had to learn firsthand. My husband was the only one working full time and you know you have to make you know you have to work with what you have in hand. And so, it's a pride and being able to look after the, the finances, the shopping, the meals….adding all of that…" (Kokoi).* Her deep pride in caring for her family was evident in her commitment to daily responsibilities such as shopping, meal planning, and preparing nutritious meals "*So I've got four children and I was that Mama, that was like, nah, that's me. I'm looking after my babies. No one else will be doing that. I was. I was quite overprotective and just wanted that time with my babies" (Kokoi).* Even so whilst preparing healthy meals she mentioned there was some tension when introducing fruits and vegetables to their meals she adds and states

"To which I had a lot of pushback, because all of a sudden mum is now wanting to change our white rice to brown rice and mum is also thinking it's such a great idea to have lots and lots of colourful veggies when she's serving our plate. Of course I didn't. In my enthusiasm. went overboard without. Having the conversation first, you know with the family as to why it's really important to start making these changes And so I I

realised I was like, OK, let me just sort of pull back and I started sharing in terms of this is what I'm learning in class. That did, you know, fibre" (Kokoi).

Motivated by a desire to extend this care beyond her home, she sought opportunities to expand her skills and knowledge. Discovering the AUT Certificate in Pacific Nutrition (CPN) course, she felt encouraged by the flexibility of its virtual delivery, which allowed her to study from home. "*But when my last one came …thinking about my baby, who's about to, you know, turn 5 and then go to school, I thought, what else can I do?And I I'd like to, you know, have a bit of just personal development, you know what are the course out there that I can sign up for, and that's where when I came across CPN (Certificate in Pacific Nutrition Course) and the beautiful thing like was, you know, it was online, which meant I could continue to do my part time job at the time, look after my family and still do that online. So I started the course and that was my first sort of exposure to nutrition and when I was doing the course" (Kokoi).*

The course opened her eyes to the significance of nutrition and its impact on Pacific health outcomes. With support from mentors such as her work colleagues including Kokoi, she immersed herself in the learning journey. Applying this knowledge at home, however, was met with some resistance. The introduction of new yet healthy foods such brown rice and more vegetables, challenged the family's usual eating regime. Subtle remarks and tensions surfaced, but over time, these changes were embraced as part of everyday meals, reflecting a gentle shift towards healthier eating.

Upon completing the CPN course, she noticed a job vacancy and, after much prayer and reflection, felt it was a sign to apply, she says "*I applied for the job and I've been here since enjoying it and lots of learnings along the way"(Kokoi).* Now as a Pacific health advisor she passes the same knowledge and advice onto her Pacific communities saying *so when I was advising my clients, I will say you know that it is possible because I am doing it …if you would just start doing some of these, it will help your family as well". And and it's more so equipping, you know, giving our community the tools themselves. So, you know, once there's awareness, once there's the steps in front of someone just like for my family, you know, it becomes doable. You know, to start making these changes when you understand. Ah, OK, I get it" (Kokoi).*

Her passion for supporting Pacific communities to make informed, sustainable lifestyle changes grew. She believes that when people understand not just the "5+ a

day" message, but also why it matters, they begin to see health as achievable and worthwhile. *Yeah, 5 + a day, but you when you understand the importance of eating, you know, colourful veggies and what it does for you and for your family, then it it becomes, you know the 'to go to' in terms of making those changes" (Kokoi).* All the while recognising the difficulty of implementing these changes as they work with the community she adds *"But at the same time, trying to implement the learning so it becomes something that I can also speak to in terms of when it comes to courses, you know that it is possible for our specific families".* In addition to her health advocacy work, she is also an entrepreneur. What began as baking for her children turned into a home-based business when their friends and extended families began placing orders. From cupcakes to celebration cakes, her baking enterprise has grown organically over time for more than a decade. Inspired by her faith and family, she continues to serve her community with creativity, compassion, and purpose. This enterprise theme is discussed further in detail in the next chapter, Chapter six.

5.4.7. Tampy – Lifestyle advocate for Pacific by Pacific

Tampy is of Samoan heritage, born to parents who migrated from Samoa to Aotearoa New Zealand in the 1970s. His father, a "decorated athlete who earned silver and bronze medals at the South Pacific Games back in the day", played a significant role in shaping his understanding of discipline, perseverance, and the value of wellbeing. His parents' first language was Samoan, and like many migrants of their time, they navigated multiple cultural, linguistic, and economic challenges in order to build a life for their family in a new country, Aotearoa New Zealand. Their journey, though complex, was grounded in faith and community, with Catholic values underpinning much of their upbringing.

Growing up, sport was a central feature in his household. As a young Samoan family adapting to a westernised environment, food and health practices often became sites of negotiation. While they maintained traditional Samoan foods within the home, they were also exposed to new dietary patterns that reflected the broader New Zealand context. His older brother, an active and sporty figure in the family, influenced many of them with his lifestyle choices. Although he developed an awareness of nutrition and health, *"like many of us, the application of that knowledge was inconsistent in our early years. Over time, especially after having children of my own, I began to notice the long-*

term impacts of these habits and realised the importance of prioritising health and wellbeing not just as a personal choice but as a familial and cultural responsibility" (Tampy). Therefore, health, sport, and family have been the core to his identity. He states *"I believe deeply in breaking intergenerational cycles of illness and stress. I want our people to thrive—not merely age with pain or succumb to preventable illnesses like arthritis or heart disease. This vision for wellbeing has shaped much of my personal and professional journey. I have worked in various roles across sectors, each rooted in advocacy and community service. I've found great fulfilment in being a voice for Pacific people—whether advocating for better conditions for working mothers or representing our communities at policy meetings. Speaking up for those who go unheard has been one of the most meaningful aspects of my career" (Tampy).* Although his passion for health and fitness was always present, it was not always easy to step into that space. He eventually completed his personal training certificate, but initially, felt a lack of confidence in navigating what can often be an intimidating and exclusive fitness industry. Despite that, he remained committed to using his voice and skills to uplift the Pacific community. He went onto say *"I strongly believe that Pacific people contribute significantly to this country, but our hard work often goes unacknowledged and unnoticed. We need spaces where our voices are heard, our values are respected, and our solutions are supported" (Tampy).* In essence his work continues to focus on enabling social change and influencing policy through cultural intelligence, equity, and love. His mentors, particularly through past union and community work, taught him the importance of structural change and showed how to transfer such advocacy into sustainable, community-led solutions. Now, he has the opportunity to work alongside an incredible team that has been active in health promotion for over 50 years, the Heart Foundation's Pacific Heartbeat team, with the shared goal to continue building on that legacy through culturally safe, empowering health and wellbeing initiatives. As a husband and father, providing for his family is essential. But has also learned that leadership extends beyond provision, it involves service, vision, and a commitment to long-term change. He then questioned this and ponders

> *"That's why I'm driven to ask: How can we serve our communities in ways that are sustainable? How do we educate in a way that resonates with our people?" (Tampy).*

He therefore believes that these goals are best achieved within "*our communities, by our communities, and for our communities*" *(Tampy)*. When we speak the same language, literally and culturally, we can do so much more. In sum being a part of this group has really opened my eyes to the potential avenues we need to give Pacific a voice through this work [public health research] and our work [at the Heart Foundations Pacific Heartbeat]. Further elaborated on in chapter six of this thesis I explore Tampys' enterprise idea of creating using a food waste initiative to promote the increase of consumption of fruits and vegetables.

5.4.8. PJ – Aspiring nutrition advocate

PJ was raised by parents who strongly encouraged him to pursue university studies, and as he said, *"I'm grateful for their guidance"*. – refer to Figure 18 of image of PJ during our talanoa session. Alongside their expectations, he also developed a strong love for sport from a young age. This passion naturally led him to consider a pathway in health and physical education. He believes in the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle, and wanted to broaden his understanding of sport, fitness and health through formal tertiary education. When it came time to choose a degree, I found myself drawn to one that aligned closely with my background and interests. As I reflected on the decision, I remember thinking, *"I thought this [degree] was the easiest for me because I've been playing sport since I was young."*

Throughout school, most of my classes were focused on sports – P.E. physical education and sports science, so continuing in this field felt like a natural progression for PJ. Now, as a university student, he is particularly invested in the areas of health, fitness, and overall wellbeing initially with nutrition but may consider the study of physical activity depending on how the semester goes he stated "*yeah just passionate about sport so if I wasn't going to eat healthy and that then I think being active would be like possible for me.."* I then probed and suggested *"...so both [nutrition and physical activity] go hand in hand?"* and PJ responded advising that *"yeah... balance"* So to PJ, he is aware that living a healthy lifestyle incorporates consuming healthy foods and getting active, which provides crucial insight to the potential for other Pacific youth to feel empowered to think and act the same. So far during the semester, he is *"finding it alright, and everything is still going"*. With assessments coming up soon, PJ aims to achieve strong grades, which adds to his motivation and focus. He also

appreciated being part of the talanoa sessions as they offered a space for collective learning and reflection. Given the shared talanoa, laughter amongst his friends, I believe his engagement during these sessions has helped PJ understand how his shared experiences and goals can positively impact young people's well-being individually and collectively.

5.4.9. Rosa – Aspiring sport health and wellbeing advocate

"Sport has always been a central part of my life, and it's something my entire family enjoys and actively participates in" Rosa said humbly while sharing her inspirational story to the group – refer to the image below Figure 18 for an image of Rosa discussing ideas as a group. She also empatically said *"My favourite food ou….yeah….everything is my [favourite] pisupo (corned beef) especially with kalo kao (baked taro) always yeah"* so the consumption of food especially Samoan food has always been a favourite food of hers. As an aiga, their shared interest in sport has shaped her understanding of health, fitness, and overall wellbeing. Since 2021, her aiga made a conscious decision to improve their nutrition by cutting out meat from their diet and replacing it with alternatives like tofu. They also switched to plant-based milk options such as almond and soy. This shift in lifestyle was also inspired by a documentary her aiga had watched on Disney or Netflix that explored how nutrition can positively impact athletic performance and overall health showing promising results such as the management of disease such as obesity, type 2 diabetes and seeing health benefits overall. "*Yes. So, I had to eat tofu. And then yeah, we changed like our milk. Now we've start drinking almond milk and soy milk. Yeah, which it did help for our sports training because we watched this documentary on Disney, Disney plus, I think on Netflix it was about like nutrition and how that could help in your sport and your fitness".* That moment was a turning point, it further sparked a genuine interest in learning more about the connection between nutrition, fitness, and wellbeing, whilst pursuing the Bachelor of Sport and Recreation degree. "*So yeah, that led me to this [the Sport and Recreation degree] Because then I saw my results or some of my fitness [progress] after those two years. Yeah, they could permit if you change to a diet and like, eat the right food and yeah, and say I would feel like training and sports" (Rosa).*

Her passion for education has always been encouraged by her parents, who have consistently reminded Rosa of the importance of studying hard and finding meaningful

work to create a secure and fulfilling future. So, with a background of family members who have successfully emersed themselves in the engineering academic space, she took it upon herself to apply for something different, a topic that she would enjoy, and have fun. So, after exploring a variety of tertiary institutions across Aotearoa she enrolled in the Bachelor of Sport and Recreation at AUT. More recently, her commitment to this pathway has deepened following the passing of her aunt from cancer. Her loss became a catalyst for my entire family to reconsider their lifestyle choices. Together, they shifted their mentality and committed to fighting illness, more specifically cancer from within through better nutrition, active living, and a more mindful approach to health. This family-driven motivation continues to inspire Rosa daily. She sees her studies not just as a personal achievement but as part of a collective journey, one that honours her aiga, promotes health within her community, and equips Rosa with the knowledge and tools to be a positive influence for others. In memory of their beloved aunty, her aiga began a food business specifically selling Samoan foods as a privately owned company called Triple T Trading. *"So, we needed more money to help with her surgeries and everything and so, yeah, we started the business".* They currently sell Samoan foods at the local Otara Markets. Rosa reiterates this humbly *"Oh no we already sell Taro in the [Otara markets]…"* and they sell everything else at the family business home, as she went on to say "*Yeah, we sell kalo (taro), ulu (breadfruit), fa'i (green bananas) , lu'au (baked taro leaves with coconut cream), koko Samoa (cocoa from Samoa). We sell salu ku's [Samoan broom] too if you need salu's".* This shows their family feel empowered to work effectively to show their love and care for their aiga given the troubling times in which they reside. Rosa continues to elaborate on the need for the importing of fresh produce including fruits and vegetables from Samoa is warranted. She says *"We don't [really] like the taro's here and stuff, so we wanted to bring our own plantation from Samoa. So, people do the stuff [organise shipping] and then they send that over and then we just try and you know make money…".* Not only is it a way to contribute to the eating of fresh produce but also a way of giving back, a strong cultural value in Fa'a Sāmoa – alofa (love/compassion) and an opportunity to continue to te le va with your loved ones *"and then we send some money over to help".* Rosa is right though. There is a difference between how taro's taste in Samoa and taro's that are sold in Aotearoa so often people looking for Samoan specific taro and other Samoan foods only produced in Samoa will seek alternative ways to get a hold of Samoan taro from Samoa, or grow their own with the hope that they can consume the same type of taro. This innovative

thinking from her family yet inspired through a tragic diagnosis of cancer in the family shows Rosa's families initiative to take the lead with forward thinking which could impact how food systems operate by the importing of fresh produce from Samoa and or other Pacific nations to be sold in Aotearoa New Zealand to increase fruit and vegetable intake or continued businesses in this space leveraging a source of income as well. This type of kiwi ingenuity is exactly what Aotearoa may need to improve health outcomes although this space needs further research. When asked about a business it boiled down to one thing – to ensure it was fun and enjoyable she thoughtfully said, *"I guess if you start a business, you just have to do something you like doing, like something fun and then yeah enjoyable".* These ideas and themes are further discussed in chapters six and seven of this research.

Figure 18

Image of co-researchers during talanoa session; From left to right DC, Julia, Meana, Rosa, PJ and Iunisi.

Note: Image of the co-researchers collectively thinking about their solutions to the current NCD epidemic and promoting healthy enterprise ideas. Own image.

5.4.10. Iunisi – From passionate sports player to studying health at AUT

This young Samoan individual, Iunisi, developed a strong interest in sport from an early age, regularly participating in physical activities throughout primary to high school – refer to Figure 18 to see Iunisi contributing to the group's ideas. Iunisi's passion was further reinforced by choosing subjects such as Physical Education, Health, and Science during high school, which deepened her understanding of well-being and performance. She quietly yet confidently said *"I was passionate about sport in high school, that's what led me to wanting to do this degree.* She was involved in sports including *"volleyball and netball"* but given Iunisi's commitment to the degree no longer plays sport as much playing those sports anymore. Encouraged by her family to pursue higher education in an area aligned with their interests, she enrolled in the Bachelor of Sport and Recreation at AUT. She expressed gratitude for the support offered by AUT. Even though she is currently enrolled in the Bachelor of Sport and Recreation Iunisi is still considering alternative options. "*Yeah, I wanted to do physiotherapy at first but I'm not sure anymore… like that was my original idea but yeah im still thinking about it" (Iunisi).* This makes sense considering she has only just left high school and exploring her options at a new learning environment different from high school. Nonetheless her academic journey reflects a commitment to her personal growth and contributing positively towards the Aotearoa fabric. Through this pathway, she hopes to build a career that integrates cultural identity, sport, and health education to promote lasting change among Pacific peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand.

5.4.11. Meana – From medicine to sport and recreation

Meana was initially encouraged by her parents to pursue a career in medicine, with aspirations of becoming a medical doctor or physiotherapist. See Figure 18 for her image as part of our talanoa session. According to Meana, growing up, sport was always a big part of Meana's life, especially during her high school years. Coming from a Cook Islands background, she was raised in a close-knit large family that placed strong value on wellbeing, education and hardwork. *"I have a big family…like there's seven of us in our family"* These values have deeply influenced the direction she has taken in life. After finishing high school, she knew she wanted to continue learning, particularly in an area that aligned with her interests and experiences. So much so with her peers she confidently said *"Actually, yeah we all went to the same school".* However, after attending an open day for the Bachelor of

Sport and Recreation programme, she found a sense of belonging and relevance in the field and decided to enrol. Now committed to completing the degree alongside her high school friends, she has developed a strong and growing interest in fitness, health, and overall well-being. So much so her favourite food is now subway *"And my favourite food…subway… But yeah, I love subway"* Her family has played a significant role in shaping this journey. Their support and encouragement have been key in helping pursue education in the health space. She now sees this path not only as a way to build a meaningful career, but also as an opportunity to give back to family and wider community by promoting healthier lifestyles and encouraging positive change through knowledge, action, and example. She is enjoying the learning aspect of the degree as well as the notion to gain a better understanding of eating healthily with the enterprise idea of the chronometer app which she now uses often and enthusiastically said "*Like what was that thing that we did [in the nutrition class] the diet thing we did like dietary intake, Maybe like teach people how to use the app [Chronometer], Yeah because not everyone knows how to use them. To learn about their foods, and the amount of sodium consumed…. like minimise, like the portions".* Clearly Meana's ability to compete in sport in her primary school through to high school years goes far beyond the physical aspect but she considers eating healthily including fresh fruits and vegetables just as important. This idea is further explored in the next chapter.

5.4.12. DC – Aspiring sport health and well-being advocate

Growing up, DC developed a strong passion for sport, having actively participated in various athletic activities throughout school. Refer to Figure 18 to see DC working hard as part of our talanoa session with his friends from high school and newly formed friendships as part of the Bachelor of Sport and Recreation programme. Encouraged by his family to pursue further education in a field they were passionate about; he chose to enrol in a Bachelor of Sport and Recreation degree. The decision to pursue this path was influenced not only by their natural interest in sport, fitness, and health, but also by a desire to transform that passion into a meaningful and sustainable career. *And also, because my parents like wanted me to go uni. So, I thought this was [easy], but I was just not easy, but I thought was easy for me because, like, I've done playing sports. Yeah, stuff like that". Pretty much all the classes I took in high school like to do with sports like Sports science and stuff like that."* Being part of a group of like-minded

students on this journey has provided both motivation and a sense of community. As DC said, *"yeah we all went to the same school"*.

This collective environment has strengthened commitment to leading a healthy lifestyle and maintaining momentum throughout the course of their studies. The shared experience of learning, training, and setting personal and academic goals alongside others has enhanced their understanding of what it means to live well and support the health of others. However, the journey has not been without its challenges. One significant barrier identified is the financial cost of maintaining a healthy lifestyle, particularly in accessing nutritious food. I asked him, "What are your thoughts around leading a healthy lifestyle?" DC responded, *"It's hard"* And I further probed asking "what do you mean it's hard? DC further elaborated contemplating carefully about what he was going to say he said, "Oh you know like it's expensive….*Healthy foods are all the expensive side of things…like how expensive things are and like I guess".* It is clear that DC is conscious and critically realistic about the realities of living a healthy lifestyle at such a young age. Therefore, clearly urgent action is required at the food system level at affordable price as well as knowledge and education around the growing of fruits and vegetables or nutritious foods in general. Despite this challenge, DC remains committed to his tertiary studies. His experience reflects the realities faced by many Pacific youths navigating education, cultural expectations, and health aspirations in contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand

5.4.13. Julia – from medicine to sport health and well being

Growing up, sport was always a big part of Julia's life, especially during her high school years. Coming from a Samoan background, she was raised in a close-knit large family that placed strong value on wellbeing and education. Not only does her inspiration for good health and wellbeing come from her upbringing but her own personal journey with exploring the education sector. This led her to enrol in the Bachelor of Sport and Recreation at AUT. Her passion for health, fitness, and nutrition has grown over time, and has become increasingly curious about how these areas can contribute to improving not only individual wellbeing but health and wellbeing among communities. When asked what your future endeavours may consist of, she responded, "*I guess just spent playing sports like when I was younger and I like taking PE and Health and Science in High school so yeah and now*

studying that this year". She views this field as significant, not only for personal growth but also for the wider potential to influence Pacific communities positively. Although she too just like the rest of the group understands that eating fruits and vegetables is expensive and that this poses a significant challenge as to why these are not consumed as often as she would like. When I asked the question, if fruits and vegetables were cheaper and more affordable would you buy and consume these more often everyone in the group as well as Julia responded enthusiastically *"yes"*. Fortunately, Julia has a good understanding of what it means to lead a healthy lifestyle and as part of the shared talanoa amongst the group she agreed with many of the ideas shared for example an area of interest for Julia is the role of technology, particularly mobile apps, in shaping healthier eating habits. She sees value in developing tools that help individuals identify nutritious versus unhealthy food choices. Her studied topics including sport, exercise and health paper within the Bachelor of Sport and Recreation degree have provided opportunities to explore these behaviours more deeply, reinforcing her motivation to contribute meaningfully to the health space.

5.5. Conclusion

This chapter has synthesised key insights from the lived experiences of 12 Pacific youth who are passionate about, interested in and who are experienced entrepreneurs highlighting how their journeys which are shaped by deep cultural values, community responsibilities, and holistic understandings of wellbeing. Their stories demonstrate that entrepreneurship, when rooted in Pacific ways of knowing and being, becomes more than economic activity, it becomes a vehicle for cultural expression, health promotion, and intergenerational change. These inspirational stories underpin the importance of culturally grounded approaches to health entrepreneurship that honour Pacific identities, relationality, and spirituality. This chapter contributes to the overall thesis by presenting youth as Pacific youth of change who redefine success through collective wellbeing rather than individual profit. It challenges dominant entrepreneurial discourses by showcasing alternative models grounded in service, reciprocity, and ancestral knowledge. In doing so, their inspirational stories contribute to broader conversations on Pacific youth futures, demonstrating that food and health-based entrepreneurship can serve as a powerful site of resistance, innovation, and healing. The

findings offer valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and health practitioners, urging them to design programmes and policies that recognise and amplify Pacific worldviews. Future research should continue to explore culturally embedded entrepreneurial pathways that promote not only economic resilience but also cultural and communal wellbeing. The following chapter, Chapter six further examines their ideas in designing their own entrepreneurial ideas allowing them to come to light with a step-by-step process and exploring ways in which this can be conducted.

Chapter 6

Pacific youth perspectives and strategies on food, health, and entrepreneurship

6.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I present the experiences, enterprise journeys, and aspirations of 12 Pacific youth, all of whom are based in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand, and are aged from 18 to 50 years of age. These young entrepreneurs have an interest in or have well established food and health-based enterprises - as a means for managing and improving the wellbeing of their families, communities, and wider Pacific populations. This is of significance given particularly in the Aotearoa New Zealand context, Pacific peoples are often marginalised for their capabilities and overrepresented in specific health statistics (MoH, 2020); often being seen as part of the problem rather than leading on solutions. Thus, I aim to share their journeys through a Pacific research lens, amplifying their voices and showcasing their aspirational visions, and values that underpin their entrepreneurial paths. These stories are not only examples of innovation and resilience but are also reflections of deep cultural commitment, collective responsibility, and the reimagining of wellbeing from a Pacific worldview.

As I listened to their stories through talanoa, what stood out to me was how strongly the co-researchers centred their cultural identity, family (whānau, ‘āiga), and collective wellbeing as core motivations for towards their approach to health and well-being as well as entrepreneurship. Despite this being common knowledge across the Pacific for centuries, it is reassuring to know these core values have continued to shape and mould our youth especially in today’s technological era and the diaspora. The co-researchers expressed desires that enterprises are not simply about generating income, but rather about restoring healthier food practices, reclaiming cultural knowledge and value, and creating intergenerational legacies of wellbeing. They navigate structural challenges, including limited access to local and regional funding, guidance, and resources, but continue to explore alternative, culturally grounded pathways that correspond with health, entrepreneurship, and identity. Through this chapter, I aim to honour their experiences and show how these Pacific youth are transforming both their economic futures and the health of their communities.

6.1.1. Research Aim and Objectives

The central research question guiding this study is:

How can Pacific youth in Auckland be supported to develop fruit and vegetable-based enterprises, and contribute to the health and wellbeing of Pacific communities?

With the following key research questions:

1) What is the current and contextual knowledge about Pacific peoples pertaining to Pacific-related NCDs, food patterns and the food system in Aotearoa New Zealand?

2) What are the perceptions and strategies of Pacific youth in Auckland concerning fruit and vegetable-based entrepreneurship?

3) How can Talanoa, guided by participatory action research principles, be used to amplify youth voices and support health-focused food strategies in Pacific communities?

This chapter responds to Research Question 2 *"What are the perceptions and strategies of Pacific youth in Auckland concerning fruit and vegetable-based enterprises?"* by providing insights into the perceptions and strategies of Pacific youth pertaining to fruit and vegetable-based enterprises. Their stories contribute to the broader aim of exploring Pacific youth health entrepreneurship through a Talanoa-based approach. The research is framed by the Fonofale model of health, which provides a culturally grounded and holistic Pacific perspective, acknowledging the interconnectedness of spiritual, physical, mental, and social dimensions of well-being (Vaioleti, 2009). Fonofale has informed interpretations of co-researchers' experiences of wellbeing, not only in physical terms, but also emotionally, spiritually, culturally, and socially. Talanoa, as a methodology, created a relational and respectful space for these

youth to share openly and authentically. It allowed us to move beyond extractive interview methods and engage in reciprocal storytelling, where knowledge was co-created through trust, empathy, and shared purpose.

This chapter is structured in two parts reflecting on phases 2 and 3 of the TPAR artefact. I provide a thematic commentary from the Talanoa sessions with co-researchers, drawing out key patterns and insights from their stories shared in chapter five. These include the importance of cultural identity and family support; the drive for healthier lifestyles; the role of education and learning; the emotional and spiritual dimensions of entrepreneurship; and the deep-rooted passion that sustains their work. In the second part I critically reflect on the barriers they face, while also highlighting their innovations and contributions to Pacific-led solutions. I conclude with a reflection on how these narratives contribute to a growing body of Pacific-centred research on health and entrepreneurship, and how these can inform future community-led wellbeing initiatives in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Through this chapter, I hope to affirm that Pacific youth are not only future leaders but reinforce that they are already leading. Their enterprises are grounded in culture, powered by passion, and shaped by a vision of collective wellbeing that is both current, urgent and transformative. This critical commentary is my way of weaving their insights into the wider research narrative, and of amplifying their contributions to Pacific health entrepreneurship.

6.2. Key themes emerging from Pacific youth Talanoa

In this section, I provide a critical analysis of the entrepreneurial narratives of twelve Pacific youth engaged in food and health-based enterprises. Drawing from their lived experiences, I identified six key themes that collectively highlight the cultural, emotional, and strategic dimensions shaping their entrepreneurial journeys (Smith, 2020; Vaioleti, 2006).

As a Pacific researcher working within the fields of health and food (see researcher positionality, Chapter 4), I approach this study with the understanding that the experiences of Pacific youth are best interpreted through Pacific frameworks of knowledge and wellbeing (Latu, 2018; Pulotu-Endemann, 2001). Using TPAR as a methodology allowed me to gain rich, nuanced insights, revealing interconnected

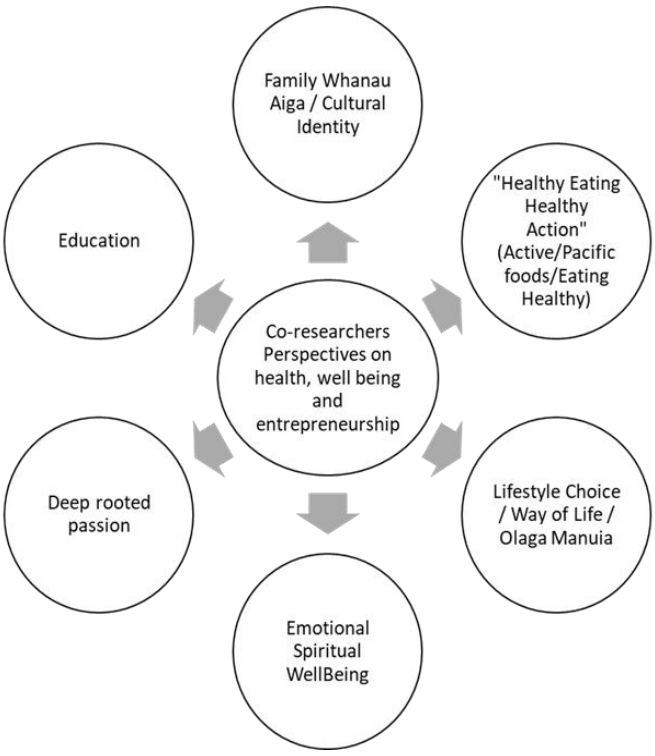
themes that I align with the Fonofale model of health (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001). I applied this model as a holistic lens, where family forms the foundation, culture acts as the protective roof, and spiritual, physical, mental, and contextual dimensions serve as the supporting pou (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001; Macpherson, 2025).

In reflecting on the coresearcher narratives, I observed that family (āiga/kainga) consistently occupied a central role in shaping both educational and entrepreneurial pathways (Anae, 2010; Vaioleti, 2006). Cultural values strongly informed their visions for food and health initiatives, with participants drawing on traditions such as Samoan organic produce, Tongan kai, and Cook Islands culinary practices as both entrepreneurial ventures and expressions of cultural preservation (Huffer, 2011; Tiatia-Seath, 2018). Spirituality also emerged as a key motivator, with several youth identifying God as their primary source of strength and perseverance (Anae, 2010; Macpherson, 2025). I noted that the mental dimension was evident in their resilience and determination to persist despite systemic barriers, including limited funding and lack of structured mentorship (Latu, 2018; Vaioleti, 2006). The physical dimension was particularly visible in their emphasis on nutrition, fitness, and addressing the urgent challenge of non-communicable diseases within their communities (Ministry of Health NZ, 2020; World Health Organization, 2021).

Through the Fonofale lens, it became evident to me that the entrepreneurial aspirations of these youth are not simply economic activities. Rather, they represent holistic, culturally embedded responses to complex health and social issues. By situating their voices within this framework, I demonstrate how Pacific youth are re-imagining entrepreneurship as a vehicle for community wellbeing, intergenerational responsibility, and cultural continuity. I explore these key ideas to highlight how these youth negotiate identity, wellbeing, and innovation through their ventures. Figure 19 is a mind map of the key themes that arose from our talanoa sessions which include 1) Family/Whānau/Aiga/Cultural Identity, 2) Healthy Eating Healthy Action (Physical Activity/Healthy Eating), 3) Lifestyle Choice/Way of Life/Olaga Manuia, 4) Emotional Spiritual Well Being, 5) Deep rooted passion and 6) Education.

Figure 19

Key themes of the co-researchers' perspectives around health, well-being and entrepreneurship



6.2.1. Family, whānau, 'aiga, and cultural identity

Throughout the talanoa sessions conducted, the co-researchers strongly emphasised the pivotal role of family, whānau, aiga and cultural identity in shaping the values and motivations underpinning Pacific youth and food entrepreneurship. Support from whānau and aiga was not only material but spiritual and emotional, grounding young entrepreneurs in ancestral wisdom and cultural obligation. Cultural identity was leveraged as a key asset in branding, storytelling, and enterprise ideas and design, reinforcing a sense of authenticity and purpose. For example, when discussing what was your passion behind starting your journey in the food, activity and health space all co-researchers mentioned that it stemmed from their families. Etienne mentioned his sisters and his nana were paramount in his influential life "

so too did Theresa – her husband, her son and her mother. She even reminisced back in her ancestors that she had come from a long line of entrepreneurs not necessarily the food space but in areas including tertiary education. For many, entrepreneurship served as a vehicle to reconnect with traditional knowledge systems, particularly in relation to food practices, thereby revitalising cultural continuity through contemporary business models.

Family was consistently positioned at the centre of participants' entrepreneurial journeys, serving as both a motivating force and a foundation upon which business aspirations were built. Within Pacific worldviews, family (whānau, āiga, kāiga) is more than an immediate household unit; it represents a wider collective of kinship ties, cultural obligations, and intergenerational responsibilities. Participants drew upon these values to frame their health- and food-related enterprises not only as individual ventures, but as initiatives intended to honour their families and serve their communities. This emphasis on family aligns with the Fonofale model of health (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001), where the fale's foundation is represented by family, reflecting its role as the base of wellbeing. In participants' narratives, their respective family was not simply a source of support but for varying reasons including leading a healthy lifestyle, pursuing an education in higher education as well as entrepreneurship.

As most of the co-researchers expressed: *"My parents pushed me to do better, to not waste the opportunities in life" (Rosa).* This reflects the common Pacific understanding of entrepreneurship as intergenerational responsibility rather than individual ambition. The acknowledgement of parental sacrifice and migration experiences was a recurring theme, with several participants situating their drive to succeed within the struggles and hopes of their families. For example, for both Theresa and Alex, they described how their family history of entrepreneurship in Samoa gave them both inspiration and expectation: *"I come from a long line of business people — my uncles, aunties, grandparents — so for me this is not new, it's part of our story" (Theresa).*

Such reflections illustrate how Pacific youth view their entrepreneurial journeys as embedded within cultural legacies. Rather than adopting Western individualist models of enterprise that prioritise self-advancement, they described their efforts as part of broader family and community narratives. This echoes what Va'ai and Nabobo-Baba

(2017) highlight in Pacific research, that knowledge and practice are relational, grounded in vā, the sacred relational space that connects individuals to families, communities, and ancestors.

The significance of family was not only inspirational but also practical. Several co-researchers noted that their families provided material and emotional support in the early stages of their ventures, from taste-testing food products to sharing resources or offering encouragement during setbacks. For example, Rosa sadly shared that her aunty is the reason why their aiga began their Samoan food business *“"Basically we started a business because my aunty had cancer" (Rosa).* These accounts reinforce the idea that in Pacific contexts, entrepreneurship is often a collective endeavour, where the risks and rewards are shared within extended relations. Yet, this reliance on family also carried challenges, as expectations to provide, serve, and succeed could create additional pressures for young entrepreneurs and those aspiring entrepreneurs.

Importantly, the co-researchers emphasised that their families shaped not only the why but also the how of their enterprises. Food and health-based businesses were often described as extensions of cultural practices learned in the home, from cooking traditional meals to communal approaches to hospitality. In Theresa’s situation, creating healthy nutritious yet creative ideas with food was the norm whereby Theresa linked her grazing table business to the feasting traditions of their family she humbly stated when asked to design one for a family member she said *“I didn't think anything of it, because I was just like, oh, that's what I do at home”*. In a similar vein, Etienne expressed his passion for food, especially Pacific Island food combined with family and to wider communities and essentially the world. He excited stated *“…[It’s the] Love of food, passion of food and interest in business just made it easy for me to, look at that as a way of continuing my love of food and family and continue that [in] the bigger, wider world”.* Such narratives demonstrate how cultural identity becomes materialised in enterprise design, with food serving as both a symbol and a tool of family continuity.

From a critical perspective, these findings challenge dominant entrepreneurial frameworks that often situate innovation as an individual, competitive pursuit. For Pacific youth, entrepreneurship was framed as a means of fulfilling obligations to family, preserving cultural heritage, and contributing to collective wellbeing. This echoes research by Mila-Schaaf (2010), who argued that Pacific wellbeing models

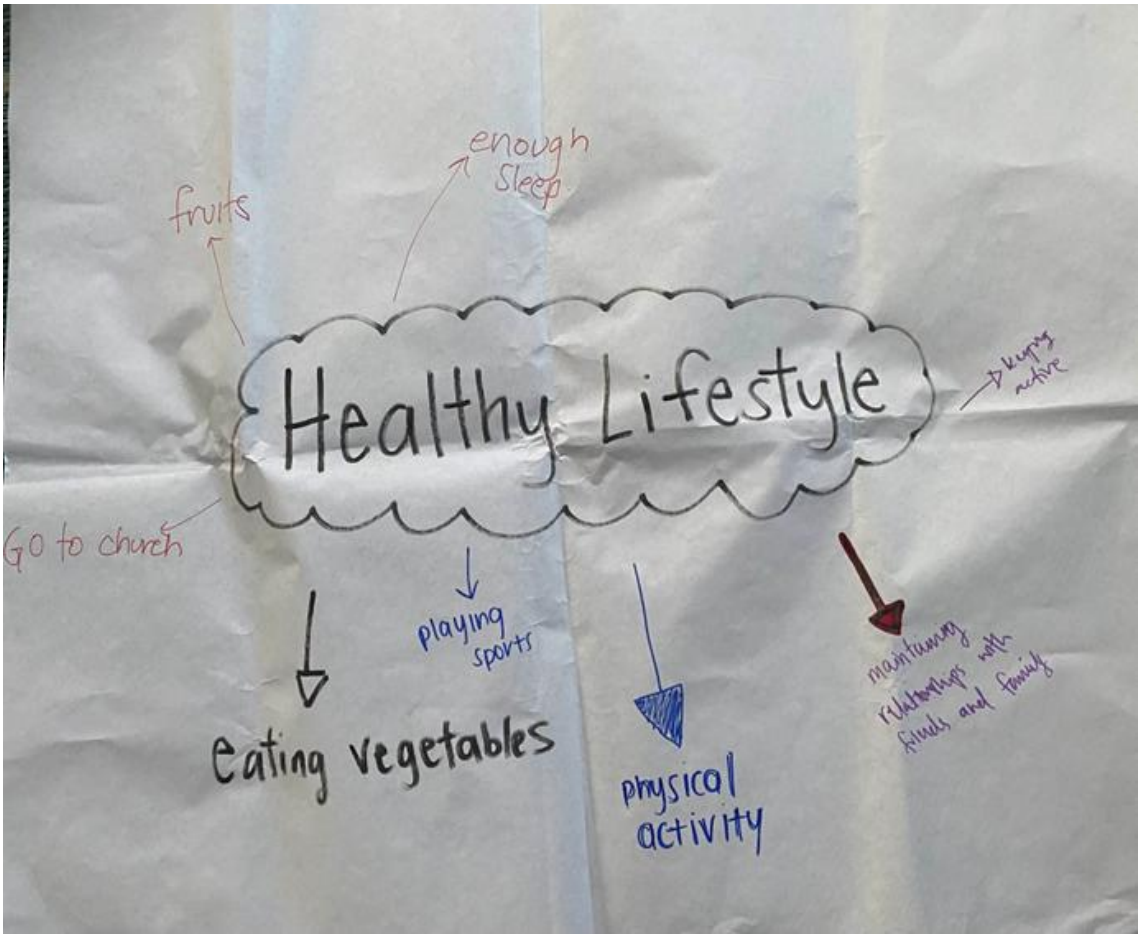
cannot be divorced from the collective values that underpin them. The stories also align with Teu le vā (Anae, 2010), which highlights the importance of maintaining balanced relational spaces between people, institutions, and knowledge systems. In this sense, participants' family-centred entrepreneurship represents a culturally grounded form of innovation that resists assimilation into neoliberal ideals.

However, the centrality of family also raises critical questions. While family can serve as an anchor, it can also constrain young entrepreneurs, particularly when intergenerational expectations clash with new ways of working or when familial responsibilities demand time and resources that could otherwise be invested in business development. As an established entrepreneur for Theresa and Alex as an aspiring entrepreneur with experience with navigating this space, both had personally reflected on these tensions. These tensions reflects' what Macpherson and Macpherson (2025) describe as the "dual worlds" Pacific youth navigate — negotiating obligations to kin while also aspiring to succeed in individual pursuits shaped by Western structures.

Overall, the theme of family, whānau, and āiga illustrates that Pacific youth food and health entrepreneurship cannot be understood without recognising its relational base. Participants' stories reveal that family is not simply a support structure but the very foundation upon which entrepreneurial purpose is constructed. By situating business ventures within intergenerational narratives of sacrifice, resilience, and cultural pride, Pacific youth reframe entrepreneurship as a collective, culturally grounded pathway towards health and wellbeing. This theme underscores the value of Pacific epistemologies, where family is both the starting point and the end goal of enterprise.

Figure 20

Factors related to leading a healthy lifestyle



Note. This is a photo of the mind map of ideas created by the AUT student co-researchers which included ideas such as relationships with family, friends, church, eating vegetables, and fruits.

6.2.2. Education and learning-as-you-go

Education emerged as a central theme across the talanoa sessions with the co-researchers, reflecting its critical role in advancing food and health literacy within Pacific communities and for those well-established entrepreneurs as a key component of their business. They emphasised the importance of understanding nutrition, particularly the benefits of fruit and vegetable consumption and the ability to cook and identify healthy food options. As Nutbeam (2000) highlights, health literacy encompasses not only the capacity to access and understand health information, but also the ability to apply it in ways that promote wellbeing. Co-researchers also discussed the educational value of reconnecting with traditional Pacific cuisine, highlighting that much of it is

inherently healthy, organic, and grounded in sustainable food systems (Pollock, 2019). They suggested the development of culturally tailored, Pacific-designed food education resources, such as visual and written materials, to enhance awareness in an engaging and culturally relevant way. *"So basically it's a set of ingredients and Pacific Island ingredients and specifically an information sheet, which will have a little bit of a history of the way that this came from some pictures of the dish, instructions of how to cook the dish. Also, a list of what you should have in your "kit" and also some nutritional information because all those things make up a really well-informed information sheet about what you're gonna... what meal/dish or whatever that you want to you've chosen to have (Etienne).*

Education was also viewed in a tertiary context, where the co-researchers portrayed value in pursuing qualifications aligned with nutrition and sport to support their passion and future aspirations. For example, as Teevale and Kaholokula (2018) argue, embedding Pacific worldviews in higher education pathways fosters a deeper sense of purpose and belonging, while simultaneously equipping Pacific youth with tools for transformative change in health. While formal education was acknowledged as beneficial in some contexts, it was also critiqued for failing to reflect Pacific values or support entrepreneurial pathways. The findings illustrate how the co-researchers engage in adaptive, lifelong learning processes that are closely tied to self-discovery and collective responsibility, rather than solely academic attainment.

Freda recommended the importance of learning more about fruits and vegetables and knowing where they come from is important given the lack of awareness so more needs to be done in this space. She explained that the rise of technologically advanced food environments, such as food delivery apps like Uber Eats, presents new challenges for children's understanding of healthy eating. The ease and convenience of ordering food with just a click reduces the need for young people to engage with food preparation and cooking practices. She *states "I don't think a lot of kids know where, like, you know, from the garden, like does a peanut [grow] on the tree or on the ground. In the trees you know and and I think it's and also some like I'm just looking at some of my cousins in their teens. Not really good with cooking, so like that, cooking side of things so it's like man, can you, can you guys at least do eggs and they're like," mmm yeah…?" you know, sort of thing so I think it's Yeah. And you know what, you can Uber, you know why make food when you can just [*looks down at mobile device to*

demonstrate use mobile apps to access the delivery of food]. Then she agrees with why Pacific peoples struggle with the differences in western lifestyle in Aotearoa New Zealand as mentioned by Tampy in the talanoa session and goes on to say *"Yeah and that's probably another thing ay going from in the Pacific where they've, you know, if you need to make coconut cream, you go… climb the tree and get the coconut or you know, find the coconut and then it's just a lot of hard work to get the coconut cream and you [have] got to squeeze it out and it tastes so much better….and then here [in Aotearoa New Zealand]…. oh, you need coconut cream? Just go up to the shop. It's just [the concept of] convenience, so it's just going from the Westernised sort of [thing], and I don't think Pacific is adapted to that as well [which is what] I've seen over the years (Tampy).*

This shift has broader implications for health education, as it undermines efforts to promote nutritional literacy and practical food skills. While these technologies can improve access to healthy options such as fruits and vegetables, they also risk diminishing the value placed on learning how to prepare nutritious meals, as convenience becomes the dominant driver of food choices.

6.2.3. Olaga/Ola Manuia – Lifestyle, purpose, and holistic wellbeing

The essence of their stories encompassed a lifestyle that was holistic meaning ola manuia. Entrepreneurship was described not just as a source of income but as a holistic lifestyle anchored in the concept of Ola Manuia—which means living well or in wellness (MPP, 2020) or further discussed at the Pacific Talanoa seminar in 2021 they also referred it is a good life rooted in relational harmony, purpose, and collective wellbeing (MPP, 2022). Overall, the established co-researcher's merged core Pacific values with their business practices, advocating for sustainability, balance, and ethical leadership. Their narratives implicitly challenged individualistic and profit-driven capitalist norms by showcasing alternative models of success grounded in service to others and long-term community impact.

In Samoan culture, the concept of *olaga manuia* refers to living a good and balanced life. The word *olaga* translates to "life," while manuia functions as a verb meaning "to have good health, good fortune, or success." (New South Wales Department of Education and Training [NSWDET], 2001). Together, the term conveys more than a passive state of well-being; it reflects an active and ongoing practice of living in

harmony, health, and prosperity. This understanding is significant, as it mirrors the ways in which the co-researchers described their own livelihoods—striving for good health, success, and positive futures as Pacific youth. The theme of olaga manuia featured prominently in their narratives.

This was expressed as both a personal aspiration and a cultural responsibility. As one participant explained: *"It's about balance — we can still enjoy our Pacific foods but in ways that are healthy way for example adding fruits and vegetables to your meals" (Alex).* The framing of lifestyle as a choice, but also as an inherited obligation, reflects Pacific perspectives where wellbeing is relational and holistic rather than individualised. The Fonofale model captures this by integrating culture and environment alongside physical and spiritual dimensions. Here, entrepreneurship was not about maximising profit but about shaping lifestyles that protect families from the growing burden of chronic disease while affirming cultural pride.

6.2.4. Healthy eating and active living

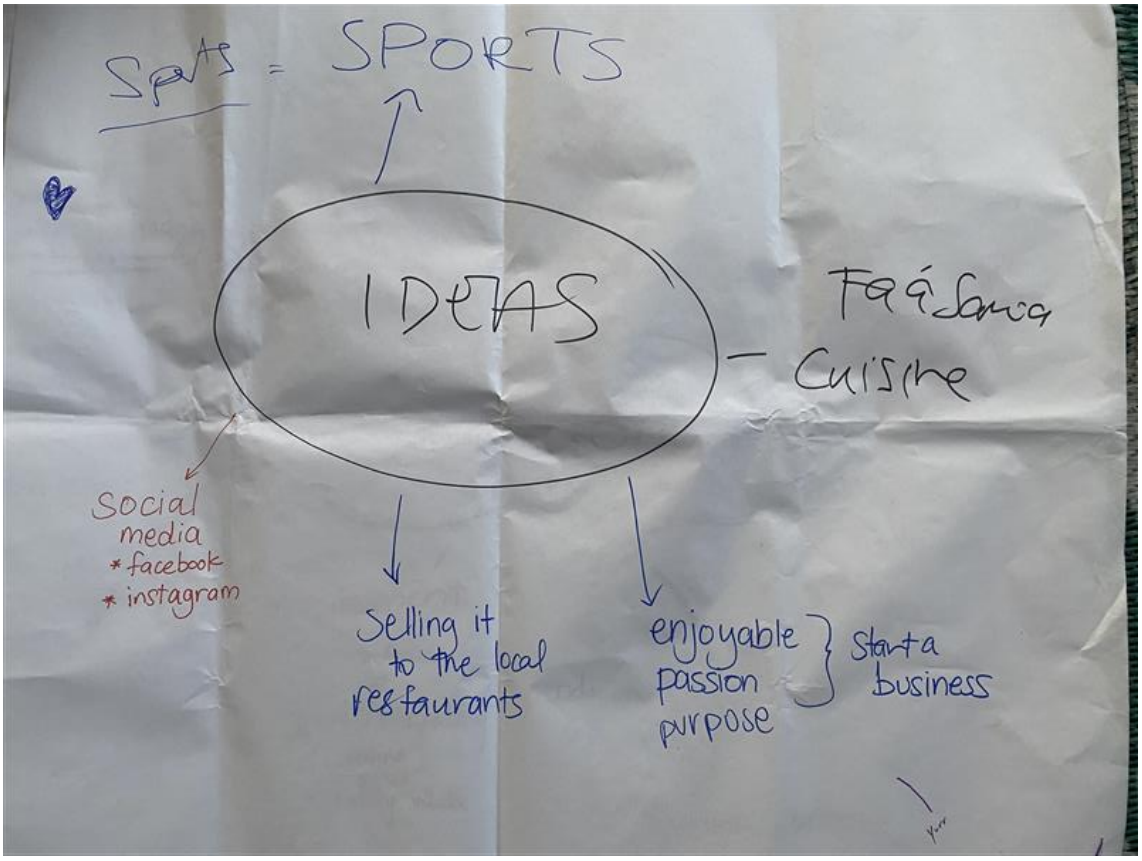
A clear link was drawn by the co-researchers between their upbringing, their knowledge and their advocacy for improved physical health and healthy eating. Food choices were seen not merely as dietary decisions but as expressions of identity and resistance against unhealthy fast-food norms. Further, they sought to reintegrate traditional Pacific foods and lifestyles into modern contexts, promoting both cultural pride and health literacy. Through their ventures, they aimed to educate communities about nutrition, fostering intergenerational awareness around healthy eating and holistic living. Specifically in Etienne's' situation as he wrote in his blog he stated, *"Using healthier options doesn't mean you lose those unique tastes, it just means you see these great Pacific dishes in a more positive way that can benefit you and your family even more!" (Etienne).*

Sport and physical activity were described as natural entry points into health entrepreneurship. For some, their business journey began through involvement in rugby or other sports, where they recognised the importance of nutrition for performance. Each AUT student coresearchers' story began was when they were younger and "*played a sport and enjoyed playing sports" (DC)* in which they use this as leverage to inspire their livelihoods and even more so their academic pathways by having enrolled in the Bachelor of Sport and Recreation degrees. This highlights a progression from individual fitness to community health promotion and a pursuit to higher education. Further, the

co-researchers saw healthy eating and active living as intertwined, with fruit and vegetable-based initiatives and sports-based engagement providing accessible platforms for wider health education and opportunities – see Figure 21 and 22 for their ideas and opportunities pertaining to health, food and enterprise. In alignment with Fonofale's physical pou, this theme shows that Pacific youth value practical, culturally relevant approaches to health that integrate physical vitality with collective wellbeing.

Figure 21

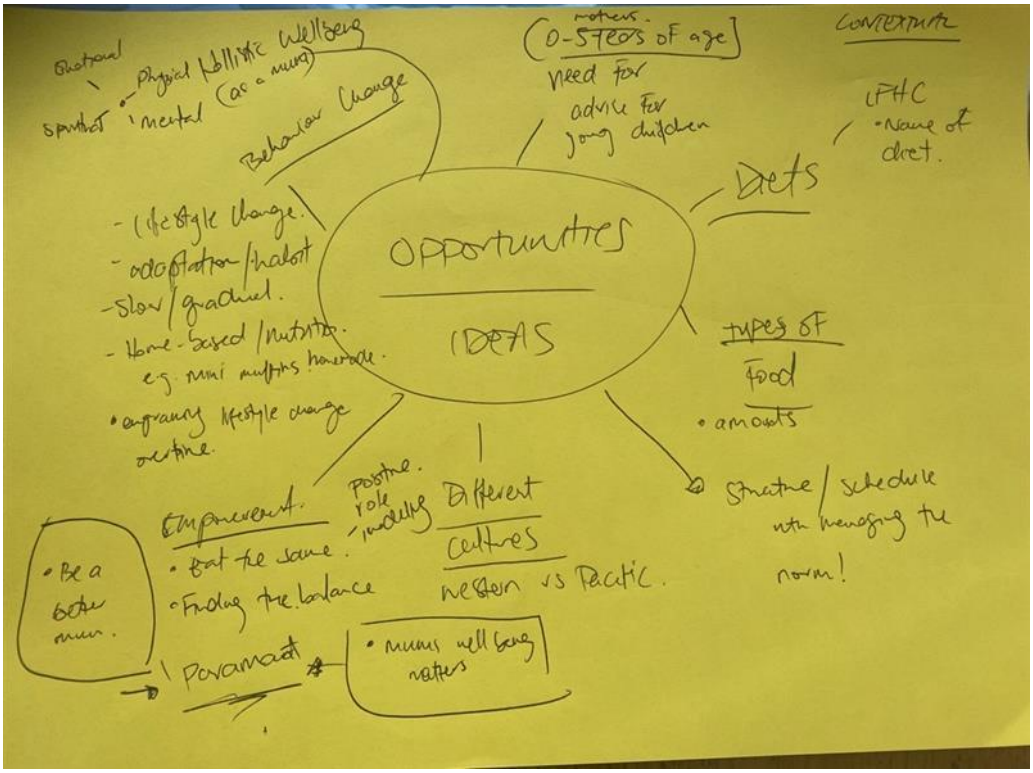
Food, Health and Enterprise related ideas



Note: This is a photo taken of the mind map of ideas created by the AUT student co-researchers. Own photo.

Figure 22

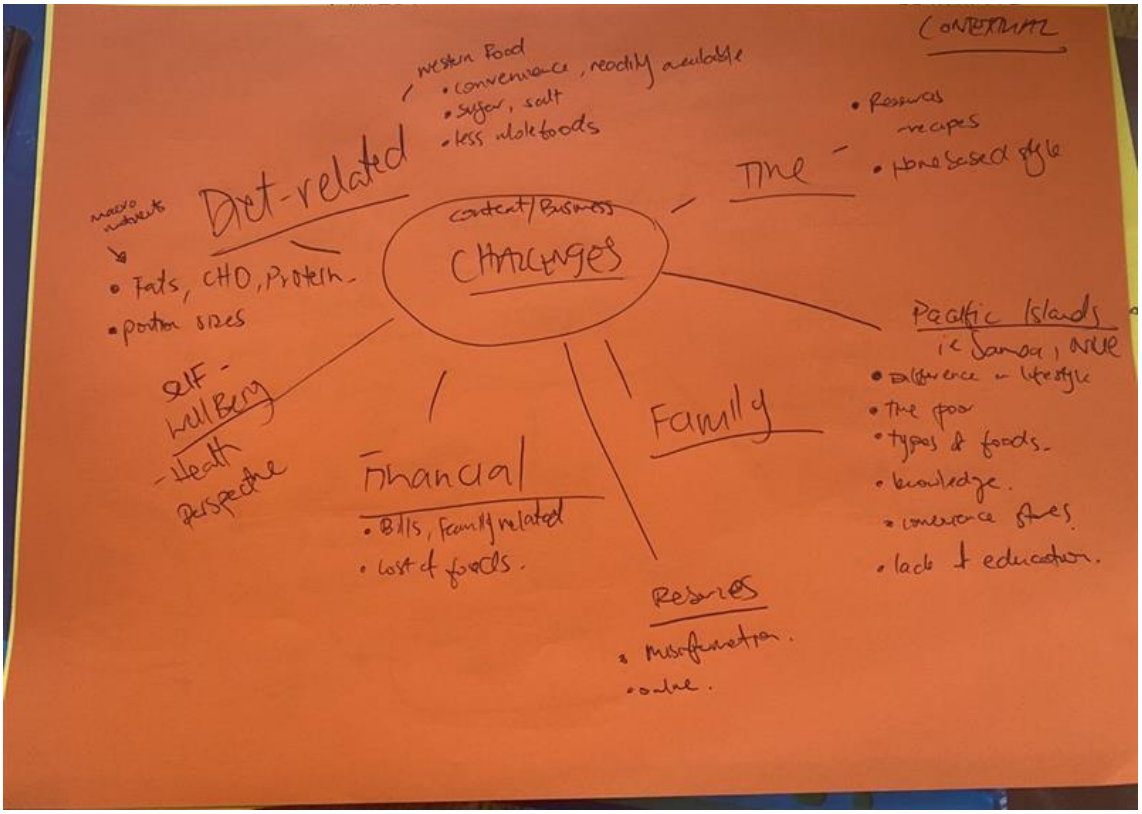
Enterprise related opportunities



Note: Image of brainstorming of enterprise related ideas to solve the NCD crisis. Own photo.

Figure 23

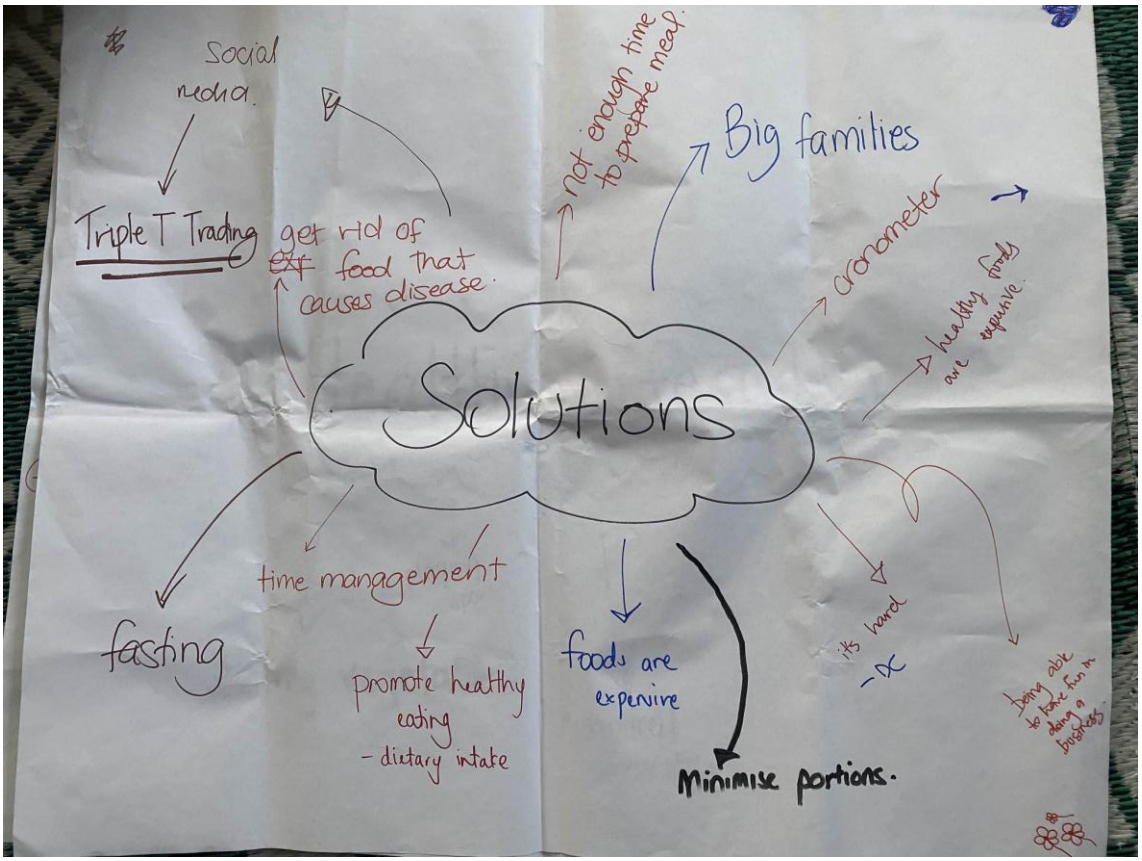
Enterprise related challenges and barriers



Note: Alex's potential challenges envisioned when starting an entrepreneurial venture. Own photo.

Figure 24

Enterprise related solutions



Note: This is a photo of the solutions the AUT student co-researchers had in mind when discussing NCD prevention, the promotion of good health and well being and enterprise.

6.2.5. Emotional and spiritual wellbeing

The emotional and spiritual dimensions of the entrepreneurial journey were central to who the coresearchers are and who they represent. They candidly described the emotional labour involved in running a business, navigating setbacks, uncertainty, and self-doubt. Spirituality, expressed mainly through faith, ancestral connection, and cultural rituals, was frequently cited as a source of strength and resilience. *"Going to church because you're going to be with your family" (PJ)* was a comment made by PJ when asked about living a healthy lifestyle. Even more so, PJ connected this idea with family in mind which reflects and reinforces the strength of family and church to support Pacific youth. For others, entrepreneurship became a pathway for healing -

fostering self-worth, empowerment, and personal transformation. These insights reveal how entrepreneurial spaces can act as sites of spiritual affirmation and emotional regeneration.

Emotional and spiritual dimensions were consistently interwoven into the co-researchers' entrepreneurial stories. For example, Theresa articulated: *"Without God I wouldn't have the strength to keep going in business" (Theresa).* Faith, prayer, and spirituality were described as essential motivators that helped participants navigate barriers such as financial strain and systemic inequities. Emotional resilience was also emphasised, with participants drawing strength from cultural values of respect, humility, and service. This resonates with Fonofale's spiritual pou, showing that entrepreneurship for Pacific youth is not only economic activity but also an expression of identity, faith, and collective healing. Spirituality provided grounding, while emotional wellbeing enabled persistence, illustrating the inseparability of health and enterprise.

6.2.6. Deep-rooted passion and entrepreneurial drive

Underlying all entrepreneurial activities was a deep-rooted passion and sense of calling. Participants demonstrated strong perseverance and long-term vision, often driven by a desire to serve their families and wider Pacific communities. This passion was not only personal but intertwined with cultural obligation and legacy. It functioned as a sustaining force that enabled youth to persist through financial, structural, and psychological barriers. As highlighted in Theresa's story earlier mentioned in chapter five of this thesis, she mentioned that it stemmed from her family in Samoa She passionately said *"...It's just my passion in life is creating. I love the creating process. I just create anything and everything and I'm happy. I love, yeah, I love creating. I call myself a food artist..." (Theresa).* Their entrepreneurial journeys, though diverse, were unified by a shared sense of purpose and commitment to creating generational change. Together, these six themes provide a nuanced understanding of Pacific youth food and health entrepreneurship. They embody how cultural identity, community values, and holistic health are central to how these young people conceptualise, design, and sustain their business ventures. The thematic insights also challenge dominant entrepreneurial frameworks by presenting culturally grounded, community-oriented, and emotionally intelligent models of Pacific-led innovation. *"Love of food, passion of food and interest in business just made it easy for me to, look at that as a way of continuing my love of*

food and family and continue that [in] the bigger, wider world. So, I know that, it's much easier to create a business in New Zealand because it's just so simple, you just get on [online], pay a few fees, and you start your business, but the big part of it is having that idea and that passion to continue to, you know, follow through with your idea as an aspiring business owner or entrepreneur or whatever [it is you decide to pursue]" (Etienne)

At the heart of all their inspirational stories I was fortunate to be a part of was a deep-rooted passion and a strong sense of calling. I observed how the co-researchers showed remarkable perseverance and a clear long-term vision, often driven by a genuine desire to uplift their families and wider Pacific communities. This passion was not just a personal ambition; it was deeply connected to cultural obligation and the legacy they hoped to leave behind. It became a sustaining force, helping them navigate financial constraints, structural challenges, and emotional pressures. Although their journeys were diverse, what stood out to me was a shared commitment to purpose and a collective drive to create generational change. These six themes together have helped me gain a more nuanced understanding of Pacific youth food and health entrepreneurship. They highlight how cultural identity, community values, and holistic notions of wellbeing are central to how these young entrepreneurs shape and sustain their ventures. Through their experiences, I see how dominant entrepreneurial frameworks can be challenged and reimagined, replaced with culturally grounded, community-focused, and emotionally intelligent models of Pacific-led innovation.

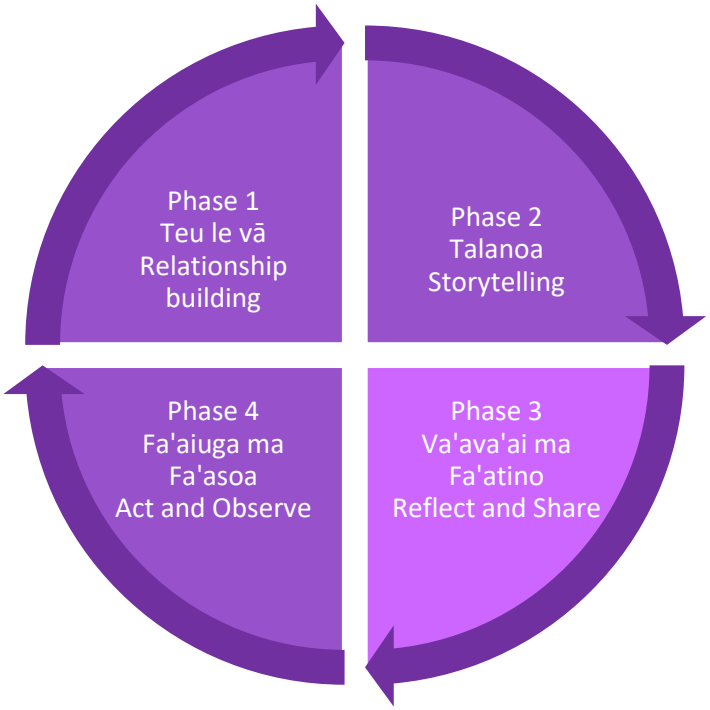
Finally, the co-researchers described entrepreneurship as more than an economic pursuit; it was a calling grounded in passion and legacy. As Etienne stated: *"This isn't just a business — it's our future, our way of showing Pacific people we can make a change…make a difference" (Etienne).* This deep-rooted drive, often tied to cultural obligation and family pride, sustained participants through financial, structural, and psychological barriers. Unlike Western models that emphasise competition and profit, Pacific youth described entrepreneurship as a vehicle for generational change, collective empowerment, and social transformation. This aligns with Fonofale's holistic framing, as entrepreneurial drive was not separate from health, family, or spirituality but interconnected with all aspects of life.

6.3. Phase 3: Va'ava'ai ma Fa'atino – Observe and Act

Phase Three of this research centred on Va'ava'ai ma Fa'atino**,** which translates to "Observe and Act", a phase that required me to move from dialogue to action, guided by youth-led insights and collective interpretation – see Figure 25. This stage was intentionally iterative and reflexive, informed by the themes that I selected during the talanoa sessions. The emphasis was on drawing on the principle that Pacific youth are not only participants but also experts and critical co-researchers in developing culturally responsive health and well-being initiatives and in this case, enterprises.

Figure 25

Image of the TPAR artefact – Phase 3 Focus



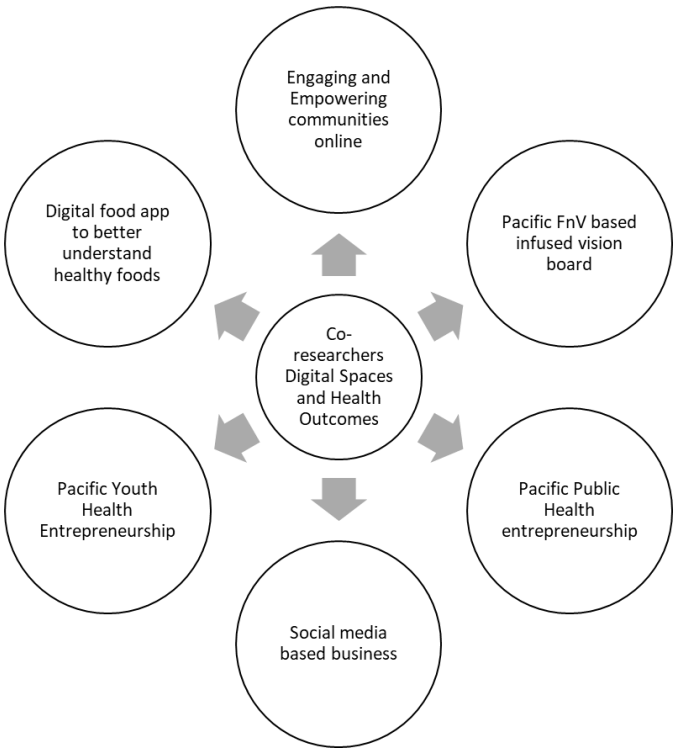
As the term suggests, va'ava'ai (to observe) and fa'atino (to act) are interconnected, representing both a watchful attentiveness to lived realities and a call to implement strategies that are meaningful to the co-researchers. I facilitated a series of interactive talanoa sessions whereby each held with two to four of the co-researchers to initiate this action-reflection cycle. These sessions served as spaces for participants to reflect on what had been shared during previous talanoa sessions and to collaboratively generate ideas for a Pacific youth health and enterprise model. The workshops were

participatory by design, offering open dialogue with semi structured questions to surface practical insights. A significant part of this phase involved interpretive action. Together, we reviewed key ideas and the thought process behind these ideas. From there themes and explored what they meant in practical, localised contexts—particularly as they related to food practices, youth entrepreneurship, social innovation, and digital engagement. The youth reflected on what had worked in their experiences, what had failed, and why. Such conversations became the foundation for developing responsive strategies, and in some cases, prototype ideas. For instance, some participants proposed the use of social media platforms to promote culturally relevant health messages. Their ideas, and innovative solutions to promoting food fruit and vegetable-based enterprises are presented below.

Innovations and Solutions to Pacific Food enterprises in Digital Spaces

Figure 26

Mind-map of the co-researchers' digital ideas pertaining to health outcomes



6.3.1. Health and Wellness Website – Alex

Alexs' idea to help combat the NCD epidemic by increasing fruit and vegetable intake stemmed from her own experiences at home with her husband and two children as discussed in her inspirational story in the previous chapter, chapter five. She wanted to create a health and wellness business specifically designed for mothers and their children, with a strong focus on Pacific families. The concept grew from recognising that, while there are general support systems available for mothers, there is a clear gap when it comes to culturally tailored services for Pacific mothers and their children so she saw an opportunity to create something meaningful that not only promotes healthier eating habits but also empowers Pacific families through accessible, culturally relevant health and wellness support.

"It's mom and dad and children. Happy, smiling together……So if you look at it in picture form, so for me, it's a family laughing together, smiling together because they are happy and they feel healthy inside and out" (Alex). Is the idea Alex had in mind for what her vision board would look like. Refer to Figure 35 of Alex's vision board idea. Alex began visualising potential images for her health and wellness idea, as these visuals carry deep cultural and health significance, particularly when viewed through the Fonofale model of health (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001). The image of a family—mum, dad, and young children—working together in the kitchen directly reflects the foundation of the Fonofale model: the central role of family in shaping and sustaining wellbeing. It also connects to the physical dimension through healthy food preparation, and the spiritual dimension through the shared cultural and relational practices around food (Sopoaga et al., 2011).

A second image of a pregnant mother on her own offers a meaningful representation of individual and maternal health. Within the Fonofale model, this aligns with the spiritual, mental, and emotional pillars, recognising the sacred role of women in nurturing life and continuity. Pregnancy, as both a personal and communal journey, can also be understood as a moment that bridges intergenerational health, cultural identity, and future wellbeing (Suaalii-Sauni & Samu, 2012). She went on to say *"It could be mom and dad in the kitchen, and the kids are helping out. That could be a good way to portray those we're trying to instil those positive habits around food, and encouraging your kids [to consume more fruit and vegetables] and, if I was to educate parents is to involve the kids in the cooking because that really instils not only positive habits but it also skills, and also encourages them to eat the food". (Alex)*. By interpreting these

images through the Fonofale lens, they become more than representations—they function as culturally embedded narratives that articulate holistic Pacific understandings of health.

Figure 27

Alex during talanoa session two

Note. Image of Alex during talanoa session having a meeting with the Pacific Heartbeat team meeting.

6.3.2. Food and beverage business - Theresa

Theresa's Nesian Bites business

The development of culturally grounded food and beverage ideas plays a vital role in promoting increased fruit and vegetable intake and preventing chronic diseases, particularly within Pacific communities where rates of NCD rates remain disproportionately high as discussed in chapter two (Swinburn et al., 2011; WHO, 2015). Theresa's business concept aligns with this concept. As personified in her inspirational story in chapter five, her business and ideas stem from a deeply personal foundation, her family's aspiration to own a home *"the idea of having..... came about when me and husband sat down and discussed what we wanted to do*

and own our own home…" (Theresa), their desire to improve dietary habits incrementally, and her own creative passion as a food artist *"I call myself a food artist"* Theresa humbly said. This approach reflects a broader opportunity to celebrate Pacific identity and wellbeing by embedding cultural values into food innovation. Her products include fresh fruits and vegetables, nuts, crackers, and hummus—items that are high in nutritional value and support healthier dietary behaviours. In images Figures 27 – 29 Theresa is providing a snapshot of what it would look like in the day in the day in the life of making a grazing table for her clients or customers as CEO of Nesian Bites. The selection of healthy foods is an example of the types of foods she would use just from scratch. It is important to note the idea of creating this occurred on the day I arrived at her place. Given it had been a few weeks we our last talanoa, Theresa intentionally wanted to make something in support of her storytelling towards this part of the research journey, so she spontaneously suggested that she provide a glimpse of her food artistry. This level of respect and empowerment showed her generosity which transcends to her business and beyond.

By integrating Pacific flavours and traditions into modern, health-focused food products, Theresa's idea connects culture with commerce, aligning with research that highlights the effectiveness of culturally tailored interventions in improving dietary outcomes (McKerchar et al., 2015; Teevale, 2011;). However, contextually, challenges remain. These include navigating market access, adhering to food safety regulations, and maintaining a balance between cultural authenticity and meeting contemporary political standards. Addressing these challenges is essential to ensuring sustainability and impact, particularly in the context of food-based solutions to reduce the burden of NCDs in Pacific communities.

Figure 28

Image of Theresa making mea'ai in her home kitchen - 1

Note: Images of Theresa creating a snapshot of grazing table food items in her home – at the beginning. Own photo

Figure 29

Image of Theresa making mea'ai in her home kitchen - 2

Note. Image of Theresa creating a snapshot of grazing table food items in her home while she is making her mea'ai. Own photo

Figure 30

Image of Theresa making mea'ai in her home kitchen - 3

Note. Image of Theresa creating a snapshot of grazing table food items in her home while she is making her mea'ai – the finished product. Own photo

6.3.3. Pacific kai kit – Etienne's website

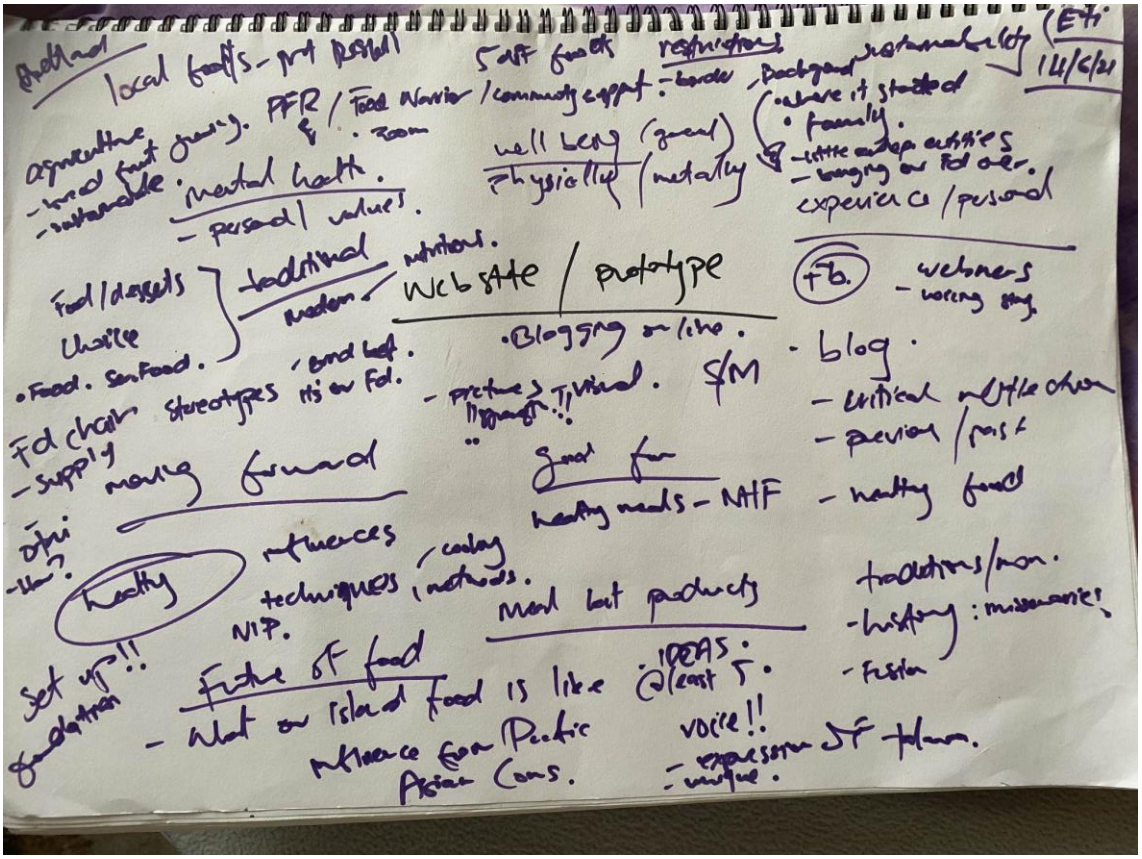
As part of Etienne's' website there was dialogue around wanting to write about his thought process behind the creation of his Pacific meal kit – refer to Figure 31 for Etienne's ideas when designing his website. As part of this study Etienne chose to write a blog about his experiences to compliment his website. He explained that writing is a way to express his thought process behind and discussed the importance of the process where he went on to say:

"A lot of finding or expressing things about myself that I haven't told anybody you know in terms of mental health and you know feelings about the business going forward also about ideas about food and what how best I could improve the meal kit, the meal kit products and just sort of trying to express also "What people? what our island food is like and what and what's involved in making it? What's the what? The ingredients are when the best time is to enjoy it and how wonderful it is because at the end of the day it is its healthy food. It represents,

you know, family and tradition and history and being in that communal sort of. Family environment"

Figure 31

Etienne's Website enterprise idea



Note. This a photo taken from the various ideas associated with Etienne's Website idea pertaining to food, health and enterprise.

In addition, Etienne's blog consisted of blogging for six days over a two-week period. As part of his creative blog, he further elaborates on how he won a competition by consuming a traditional Tongan drink, Otai and his awesome achievement. From day four of the six days of blogging, he writes:

Winter is here!

Ótai drink is a winner!

Ötai is a favourite summer drink for Tongans. Fresh watermelon, grated and mixed with fresh coconut milk has been a Tongan staple for a very long time.

And recently I entered the otai drink in a competition for aspiring entrepreneurs and fortunately was one of the winners! The judges loved its story and unique pacific quality which could find a small niche in the massive drinks market in New Zealand. I'm glad that the judges liked my idea, it's always humbling to get great feedback and advice on an idea that you love so I will use this when I enter the next competition which will assess the idea as a full-fledged business plan with finance sheets! Life is a bit busy right now with family life, studies, other business tasks and now this new idea to work on. But I am excited and ready for the challenge. I don't need to push the body to the limit like I did last year, just work a little bit on each area each day which means for me crossing off some tasks on my to-do list. it doesn't help that winter is here and I'm hastily moving to get flu jabs first before the COVID-19 vaccine two weeks later. I need to treasure my sleep so that my body can deal with the extra pressure of uni and business deadlines coming up the next few weeks. But I'll be ok, all I need is a ótai drink to ease my mind...but no ice for me...or sugar, I'm sweet enough! (Etienne).

6.3.4. Food Waste Initiative – Building Community Capacity

Tampy's food waste initiative embodies a grassroots response to the dual challenges of food insecurity and sustainability, grounded in collective cultural responsibility. His vision draws from Pacific values of communal care and reciprocity (vā fealoa'i), proposing a system where surplus food is redistributed to families in need, simultaneously reducing waste and enhancing community resilience. As a youth-led initiative, it emphasises the importance of building community capacity through participation, education, and shared responsibility. "*The cost is definitely something that I'm also tuning into the food chain suppliers who just waste food. If there's someone advocating for that food can go to so many mouths, the church communities, you know schools, so I think that's important to intercept before it gets wasted. Because if we don't ask you know, you don't know people…But that will make you step up and do it. And so, you will step up and go and ask that person "hey, I see that you get rid of all that bread. Where does all that food go to after you finish? Because I know some people that could benefit from that and that'll save you a waste tip, you know,*

it'll save you on the budget and stuff, but it's gonna benefit a lot of people. So, if we can just tune in more to that" (Tampy).

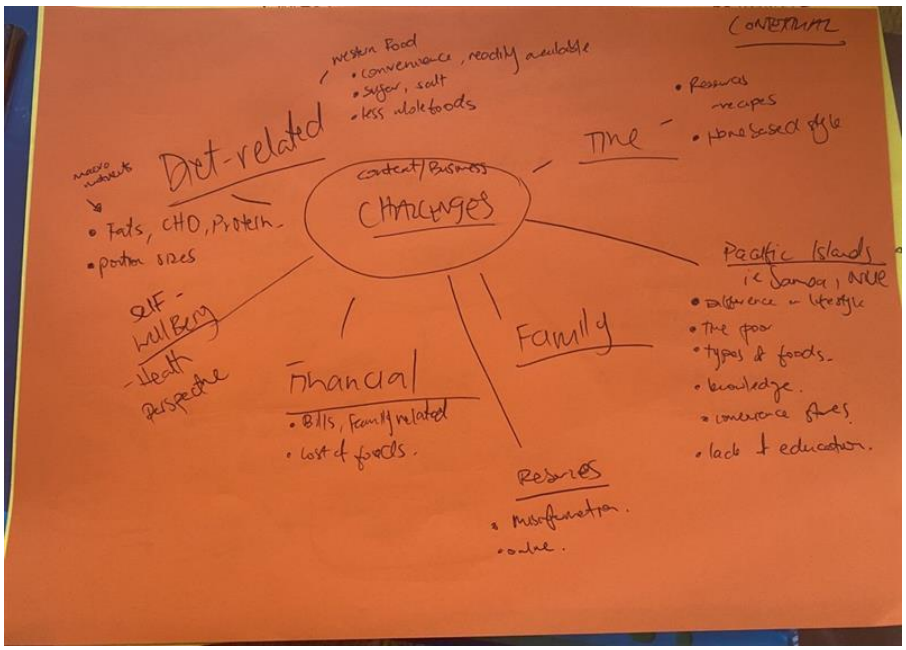
Kokoi agrees with this but from the perspective of a community garden. She suggested that community gardens and starting your own enterprise this way in extension of solving the food waste issue and improving access to fresh fruits and vegetables and lower the cost of fresh fruits and vegetables for families and essentially the cost of living. She began with highlighting a current enterprise: *"Have you heard of the wonky box? So it's it started off with two people who saw that farmers were just throwing away their seconds because supermarkets were not, you know, that it didn't quite meet their standards of what they could sell, and so they said well we're going to go and have a talk to the growers get there seconds because they're still perfect vegetables. And then they started their business, so they do that working directly with growers and being that middleman to people who order. So, they've set up, you know, the business has grown from, I think they started off either in Wellington or Christchurch? I'm not too sure, but they now are in Auckland as well, and they're just continuing to grow and I was like, that's quite innovative, - then she went to say that establishing these community gardens she continues saying "...I think working out something like that for your local community in terms of like who can I be talking with? who can I work with? Hey, if there's a community garden then maybe you know working with them so that they're getting the benefits as well, but families are getting veggies for much cheaper. Yeah, that's one of the things. That I thought in terms of access and also maybe cutting down on cost for families" (Kokoi).*

However, Tampy identified several challenges. Sustained community engagement is essential but difficult to maintain without dedicated resources and leadership (Sundaram et al., 2019). Youth, while innovative, often face time constraints, especially when balancing education, work, and family duties (Teevale et al., 2016). The initiative also suffers from systemic barriers such as underfunding, limited infrastructure, and the absence of culturally safe mentorship or policy frameworks that support young Pacific entrepreneurs (Prescott, 2008). Despite these barriers, Tampy's idea reflects a growing

movement toward locally driven, culturally grounded health solutions in the Pacific context. As Lee-Morgan and Hutchings (2016) and Cram et al. (2022) argue, such initiatives challenge top-down approaches by foregrounding Indigenous knowledge, values, and leadership in creating sustainable community change. I observed that some participants experienced a lack of intrinsic motivation, which appeared to stem from a combination of personal and structural factors. I reflected on how pressures, competing obligations, or feelings of burnout sometimes outweighed passion for enterprise, highlighting the tension between external expectations and internal drive. Using the Fonofale model, I considered how these challenges affected holistic wellbeing, including physical, mental, spiritual, familial, and environmental dimensions, and how they shaped the participants' engagement with health and entrepreneurship.

Figure 32

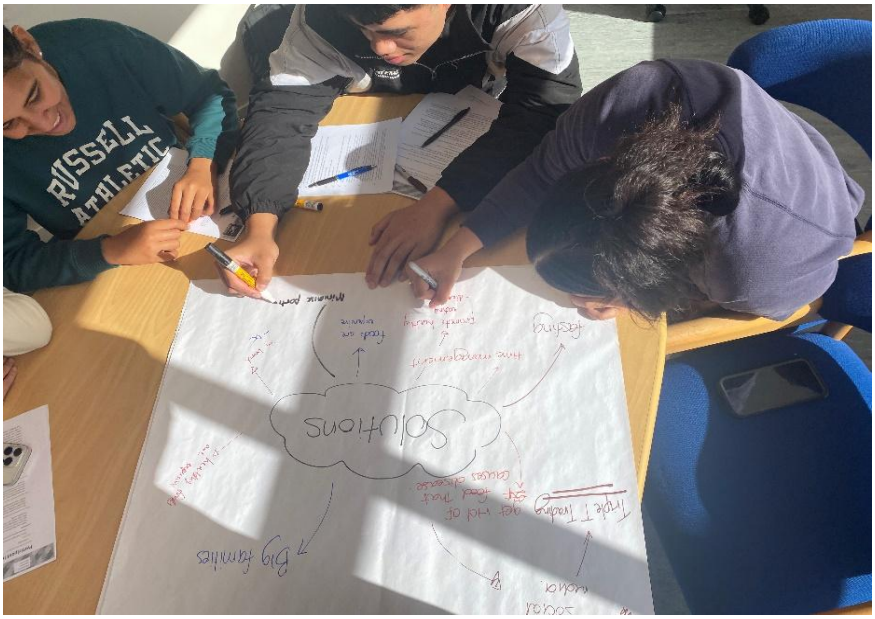
Image of challenges associated with the design of ideas



Note. Own photo.

Figure 33

Image of AUT student co-researchers co-creating their ideas



Note. This is a photo taken of the AUT student co-researchers writing down and brainstorming their solutions to NCD prevalence and promoting fruit and vegetable-based enterprises

6.3.5. Vision boards as digital outputs

In this research, with lengthy discussions with my academic supervisors, I used vision boards as an empowerment and engagement tool to support Pacific youth in articulating their entrepreneurial aspirations and health goals. Vision boards including visual collages of images, words, and symbols, serve as a powerful method for facilitating self-reflection, goal setting, and dialogue. As a participatory tool, they provide a non-verbal, creative outlet that helps participants express complex ideas and emotions that might not easily surface through conventional interviews (Gauntlett, 2007). I found that vision boards encouraged youth to imagine possibilities beyond their immediate circumstances, fostering a sense of agency and ownership over their future.

From an empowerment perspective, vision boards align with Freire's (1970) concept of critical consciousness, enabling participants to reflect on their lived realities and envision transformative change. This is especially relevant in

Indigenous and Pacific contexts, where visual and oral storytelling traditions are central to knowledge sharing and collective meaning-making (Smith, 2012). In this case, vision boards acted as both a mirror and a map—reflecting Pacific youths' identities and values, while also charting potential pathways toward improved health and wellbeing through entrepreneurship. In this way, the tool transcended its aesthetic form to become a culturally responsive, strengths-based mechanism for empowerment, engagement, and future-focused action.

In the current study, I identified a significant opportunity in the use of visual talanoa through culturally infused fruit and vegetable branding. This approach allowed Pacific youth to creatively express their identities, values, and aspirations through culturally resonant imagery, colours, and symbols embedded within their entrepreneurial ideas. It became a meaningful way to visually narrate their connection to health, land, and cultural heritage, while also promoting fruit and vegetable consumption in a way that felt authentic and community driven. The process of creating these visual brands fostered a sense of pride and ownership, offering an empowering avenue for youth to imagine their place in the health and entrepreneurship space. Figure 34 is a vision board I created that represents the key themes from each of the co-researchers in the form of a vision board. It includes key quotes and images that best represented the co-researchers in their own regard. I compiled this then emailed this to each co-researcher in support of their response. Three out of the 12 co-researchers responded positively to the image advising their support for the vision board that it *"looks great"*.

Figure 34

Image of vision board of all 12 co-researchers' ideas

Note. Own image produced using Microsoft word.

Figure 35 represents Alex's vision board idea. We walked through each image of the six images would use to illustrate her vision board as a whole. Although, there was not enough time to select images from Alexs' facebook page (as i have access to this) and to show her so instead I used GenAi ChatGPT to generate her images, then used a Microsoft word document to place her images on with the use of key terms that she used throughout our talanoa in this phase of the TPAR cycle to ensure the vision board reflected her voice, thoughts and ideas. This is yet to be verified by Alex which is something I hope to do as part of the next phase of this research if the opportunity arises.

Figure 35

Alex's Vision Board idea

Note: The images are GenAi generated then placed on a Microsoft word document to illustrate Alex's ideas with the use of a vision board.

However, I also critically reflected on a key challenge, that while this form of branding is symbolically powerful, it may lack the structural impact required for sustained, actionable change. Visual storytelling alone, without supportive systems, resources, and pathways for implementation, risks remaining at the level of symbolic empowerment rather than translating into tangible outcomes. This raised important questions for me about how to bridge

creative expression with structural support to ensure that these ideas move beyond inspiration and into real-world enterprise development that can influence health behaviours and outcomes meaningfully across Pacific communities. Regardless, these vision boards are complimentary to the TPAR action cycle that in fact such an artefact can be a substantive and informative outcome to using this action cycle in the research context.

Figure 36

Theresa's Vision Board

Note. This is an idea of vision board that represents Theresa and her Nesian Bites business as the images of the food display are from her business Instagram page and the image of her in the centre is her in the home having made her delicious and creative food artistry during our 3rd Talanoa session.

6.4. Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have brought together the voices of Pacific youth and the analytic power of Pacific health models to illuminate the promise of fruit- and vegetable–focused entrepreneurship in Aotearoa New Zealand. Their ideas– a tapestry of websites, apps, social media posts, and community plans – stands as a testament to youth creativity grounded in Pacific culture. It demonstrates how TPAR can provide opportunities to hear from and foster healthy and sustainable food systems in ways that resonate with Pacific people. Through this Pacific lens, I can see that innovation is not just about new tools but about expressing and elevating Pacific relational health. The artefact's significance lies in its culturally resonant foundation being influenced by the fundamental values Fonofale is structured, that it is built on 'Fonofale' values of family, spirituality, and interconnectedness, and it carries forward youth aspirations in an embodied form. Reflecting on the process, I reaffirm that TPAR is the enabling force behind culturally grounded innovation. Talanoa allowed us to engage youth in their own language and style, ensuring the research project remained Pacific and youth led. It was through respectful dialogue (and attentive listening to silence) that we captured authentic ideas and co-crafted solutions. The chapter has shown that using Pacific-centred research methods – integrating Fonofale with Talanoa and participatory action research, produces insights and artefacts that would likely be perhaps ignored by Western frameworks alone. This cultural approach amplifies youth voice, a point reiterated in the former studies in line with this research I was involved in and first mentioned in chapter one of this doctoral thesis, conducted by Conn et al., (2020) in Fiji and Cammock et al. (2021) stating that Talanoa and participatory action research were adapted to create a unique Pacific 'action cycle' focused on youth agency.

In the next chapter of this research, I build on these insights by examining how these strategies inform broader community health and policy and reflect on lessons for decolonising research. Based on these findings, it is evident Pacific youth-led fruit and vegetable entrepreneurship-based TPAR artefact embodies Pacific relational participatory action research: it honours collective values while embracing creativity. By grounding innovation in Pacific epistemologies, we have showcased a platform where Pacific youth lead the way in shaping healthy futures, reminding us of some of the best solutions are grown from the soil of our own culture.

Chapter 7

Reflections on the TPAR artefact

7.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I examine and reflect on the TPAR process, and the inspirational stories and ideas shared by the co-researchers who are either actively involved in or interested in fruit and vegetable-based food entrepreneurship. This chapter is underpinned by Phases three and four of the TPAR cycles —Va'ava'ai ma Fa'atino (Observe and Act) and Fa'ai'uga ma Fa'asoa (Reflect and Share) respectively – see Figure 37 for the TPAR cycle. In doing so, I explore how they developed such strategies to increase fruit and vegetable intake as a culturally grounded response to the NCD epidemic and ultimately to inspire healthier lifestyles through increased fruit and vegetable consumption among Pacific communities.

This section of the study critically examines the strategies and enterprise ideas developed by Pacific youth in response to issues of fruit and vegetable consumption and health entrepreneurship. Central to this exploration is the primary research question: How might Pacific youth in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand be supported to develop fruit and vegetable enterprises and contribute to the health and wellbeing of Pacific communities?

From this primary question, three key sub-questions were developed:

1) What is the existing current and contextual knowledge about Pacific related NCDs, dietary food patterns, and the food system in Aotearoa New Zealand?
2) What are the perceptions and strategies of Pacific youth in Auckland concerning fruit- and vegetable-based entrepreneurship?
3) How can Talanoa, informed by PAR be utilised to support Pacific youth voices and strategies in fruit and vegetable promotion?

The current chapter responds directly to key questions two and three by presenting a critical commentary on the development of the TPAR artefact and the youth-driven enterprise ideas that emerged from this TPAR process. I explore how Pacific youth identified both structural and relational opportunities and challenges in pursuing food-based entrepreneurship. Moreover, this chapter demonstrates how Talanoa, as a dialogic

and relational method embedded in Pacific knowledge systems (Vaioleti, 2009), was used to amplify youth voices, guide TPAR cycles, and shape the culturally grounded strategies they developed. The chapter therefore illustrates the dynamic relationship between participatory action, Pacific epistemologies, and innovative health-focused entrepreneurship. During these phases key questions were asked to help facilitate the talanoa sessions including What are your ideas around developing fruit and vegetable-based enterprises? What are the strengths and barriers to implementing your ideas?, also, how does your idea/concept/ help support the public health issues in today's society such as type 2 diabetes, for example Pacific empowerment to promote healthy lifestyles?

In practice-led research, as discussed in chapter four of this thesis, artefacts generally are central to both the process and outcomes of inquiry (Makela, 2007). They are not just by-products but are often the primary means through which knowledge is created, embodied, and communicated. As a researcher, I engaged with this understanding by developing and using the TPAR artefact as a central component of this Pacific based study. This artefact (structured around a four-phase cycle) is grounded in Samoan epistemology and ontological values, relational ethics, and collective talanoa, allowing me to conduct this research alongside the co-researchers in a culturally responsive way. Rather than separating the research from practice, the artefact acted as both a methodological tool and an empowerment and engagement, enabling them to express and refine their ideas for fruit and vegetable-based enterprises aimed at improving health and wellbeing in their communities. Through this iterative process, the TPAR artefact helped reveal the opportunities and challenges of entrepreneurship from a Pacific youth perspective. It was not just a framework I applied, but a living, evolving structure that shaped the research journey. In doing so, it affirmed the value of Indigenous knowledge systems and the role of culturally rooted artefacts in practice-led research.

Methodologically, while this chapter focuses primarily on Phases three (Vaʻavaʻai ma Faʻatino – Observe and Act) and four (Faʻaiʻuga ma Faʻasoa – Reflect and Share) of the cycle, the earlier phases—particularly Phase 1 (Teu le Vā) and Phase 2 (Talanoa)—played a crucial role in shaping and supporting the development of participants' stories and enterprise ideas. Teu le Vā, as a relational and cultural concept (Anae, 2007), was instrumental in establishing and maintaining respectful, reciprocal relationships between

myself as the researcher and the youth as co-researchers. This process involved creating safe, culturally grounded spaces where trust and relational ethics guided the research process. In addition, the Fonofale model of health served as a critical philosophical lens (Vaioleti, 2009) that informed and influenced the participants' ideas throughout the TPAR process, with strong emphasis on phases three and four – see Figure 4 for Fnofale framework. The four key pillars—spiritual, mental, physical, and social well-being, coinciding with context and time, contributed significantly to developing of the youth-led strategies and food-focused business concepts. Ultimately, the TPAR cycle itself acts as the core artefact—an enabling framework through which Pacific youth voices and innovations are made visible, validated, and connected to culturally grounded knowledge and collective aspirations for health and well-being.

Although the methodological foundation of this research is grounded in the TPAR framework - comprised of Teu le Vā, Talanoa, Va'ava'ai ma Fa'atino, and Fa'ai'uga ma Fa'asoa - it was developed and applied with co-researchers from diverse Pacific backgrounds, including Tongan, Kiribati, and Cook Islands heritage. While Samoan in structure, the TPAR model reflects a broader constellation of shared Pacific values such as relationality, respect, reciprocity, and collective well-being. These cultural principles are similarly embedded in Tongan concepts of tauhi vā, Kiribati practices, and Cook Island notions. Fortunately, Talanoa, although rooted in Tongan and Samoan oratory traditions (Vaioleti, 2015), has been widely adopted as a flexible Pacific research method (Conn et al., 2020; Sa'uLilo, 2016). It provides a culturally resonant space for dialogue that accommodates multiple worldviews while maintaining the integrity of each.

During the TPAR process, I actively practiced cultural responsiveness—adjusting my tone of voice, engagement, and setting to align with the specific values and communication norms of each co-researcher. For example, respect for matua in the Samoan context (Sa'uLilo, 2021) and matu'a (elders) in the Tongan context (Garden et al., 2024) and extended family shaped how the co-researcher engaged with business ideas and health narratives. This adaptability demonstrates that the TPAR artefact, while Samoan in its construction, is relationally inclusive and capable of holding multi-ethnic Pacific contributions. It affirms the methodological relevance of the artefact as a collective, Pacific framework grounded in Indigenous Pacific knowledge systems. This chapter serves three key purposes: 1) it critically examines the strategic artefact, the

TPAR cycle four-phase framework, and the findings that emerged through its iterative, culturally grounded process, 2) explores how this Samoan-based framework, adaptable across broader Pacific contexts, supported Pacific youth in articulating opportunities and challenges in developing fruit and vegetable-based enterprises aimed at improving health outcomes and 3) a presentation of the innovative ideas and strategies generated by the coresearchers to promote the increased consumption of fruit and vegetable eating ultimate promoting good health and wellbeing within Pacific communities, highlighting the potential of culturally responsive, community-led approaches to address health inequities through social entrepreneurship.

7.2. TPAR artefact

As I weaved together the insights from the talanoa sessions with the co-researchers, certain patterns became clear. Across health websites, apps, businesses, and community projects, Pacific youth consistently centre family, heritage, and communal benefit. For instance, almost every idea included elements that connect to their own family story or cultural practice – telling stories of parents and grandparents, using Pacific languages, or targeting benefits for siblings and cousins. This pattern reaffirms that Pacific youth do not conceive entrepreneurship in isolation; it is always embedded in the social fabric of aiga (family) and land. It is noteworthy that although the projects were technologically innovative, the underlying values remained grounded. In Fonofale terms, our TPAR artefact (the constellation of ideas and prototypes we created) engages every dimension: the physical (improving diets), mental (learning and empowerment), spiritual (family connections, generational aspirations), and other (social inclusion, addressing inequality). The surrounding elements of context, time and environment of the Fonofale is visible too – with attention to climate change, local food systems, and policy barriers.

Our youths' designs often implicitly addressed these: apps in part educating about seasonal vegetables, or waste projects responsive to local climate concerns. However, I noticed we rarely made the time dimension explicit. In future TPAR, we could foreground how traditional seasonal food calendars or Pacific historical timelines can enrich the artefact. As such, while the Fonofale family foundation was robust in the

Pacific youth designs, the roof of culture was at risk if ideas were too Westernised. I had to push back on myself and the group: for example, utilising a social media-based video truly in service of our culture, or was it merely imitating Western content? These reflexive questions are the strength of Pacific methodologies – they demand that innovation be interrogated through cultural lenses. Overall, the TPAR artefact is meaningful because it embodies youth voice and Pacific methodology. It shows that talanoa-driven PAR can yield creative, culturally anchored health promotion tools, but also reveals gaps where deeper tradition (i.e. Fa‘a Sāmoa customs or Fa’afafine perspectives) could further inform the work.

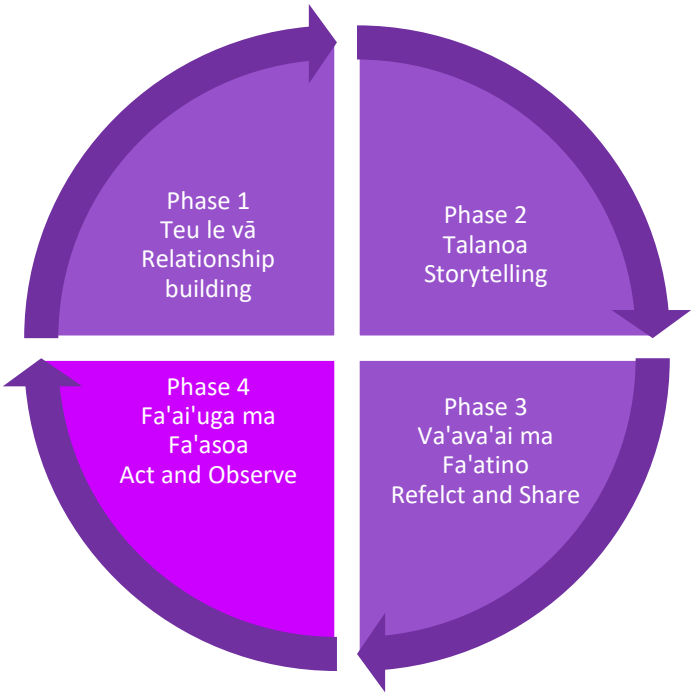
Finally, reflecting on youth involvement and engagement, I see that their roles were dynamic. The young youth members who participated in this research were not passive subjects but co-researchers. They often self-initiated tasks beyond structured talanoa. I was struck by how much they took ownership. At times, this meant stepping back during discussions, then later taking silent action to implement ideas – an embodiment of the silence speaks volumes concept (Nanai, 2015). We recognised their agency was cultural as much as personal: for Pacific students, humility might mean not dominating a meeting but letting one’s creativity quietly shine. Throughout the TPAR cycle, I tried to remain attentive to these unspoken cues, valuing artefact creation as an extension of talanoa itself. In sum, the TPAR artefact we produced represents a dialogue between Pacific youth voices and relational health values: it is as much a mirror reflecting their agency as it is a tool for future health innovation.

7.2.1. Phase 4: Fa’ai’uga ma Fa’asoa – Reflect and Share

The final phase of this study, Fa’ai’uga ma Fa’asoa**,** meaning “to conclude and to share,” focused on reflecting on the research journey and disseminating findings back to the community. This phase is rooted in a Pacific relational ethic that honours reciprocity, accountability, and collaborative meaning. Central to this process is the principle that research must return to the people from whom knowledge was co-constructed—not simply as a formality, but as an ethical and cultural imperative (Anae, 2016; Vaioleti, 2006). As such, I was intentional in designing this phase to ensure that the co-researchers, and wider community stakeholders remained central to the interpretation, application, and presentation of findings.

Figure 37

Image of TPAR cycle – Phase 4 Focus



The dissemination process will take place across multiple platforms, including both online and face-to-face forums. I plan to hold a talanoa session with the wider Auckland community, including Pacific youth co-researchers, representatives from government and non-governmental organisations, health and education professionals, and elders. This event will function as both a closure and a generative space—a place to share insights and co-reflect on the experiences, aspirations, and outcomes of the study. Importantly, it offers stakeholders the opportunity to respond, question, and contribute to the ongoing evolution of the work.

In addition to this community-based sharing, conference presentations, academic seminars, and policy briefings will serve as further avenues of dissemination. These channels aim to engage both academic and practitioner audiences and to advocate for structural support of Pacific youth-led innovation in health and enterprise. One of the creative strategies employed during this phase was the integration of vision boards as TPAR artefacts. These vision boards emerged as powerful tools for both expression and analysis, enabling Pacific youth to visually map their aspirations related to health, enterprise, and community well-being. Rooted in the talanoa process, the vision boards

offered a unique dialogic entry point. They allowed participants to link personal values, such as family, spirituality, food culture, and digital engagement, with strategic planning for their entrepreneurial and health journeys.

For instance, during a talanoa session with Alex, which took place via Microsoft Teams due to her demanding work schedule, we co-constructed a step-by-step process of designing a potential health and wellness session and vision board and what this would look like that captured her health aspirations and entrepreneurial interests. Alex had no prior experience in creating a vision board, so we carefully walked through each step, starting from her initial ideas to articulating them visually. I drew on my experience as a researcher and vision board facilitator to assist in translating her verbal reflections into visual symbols. The resulting artefact became more than a planning tool—it was a visual representation of her hopes, challenges, and vision for community impact.

A similar method was employed with Etienne, as we explored his concept of "First Kai"—a food initiative grounded in first principles of nutrition and cultural knowledge. With Teresa, we developed a visual plan for her business, Nesian Bites Ltd which aims to integrate health education with accessible Pacific food products. In each of these cases, the vision board process provided clarity and momentum, anchoring abstract ideas into tangible goals. It also reaffirmed how Pacific youth draw on their cultural frameworks to innovate, plan, and advocate for well-being.

I also applied this method with a group of tertiary students. Their vision mindmaps reflected diverse interpretations of health, from the use of social media as a wellness platform to aspirations of launching their own products. A recurring theme across these discussions was the emphasis on both digital and hands-on strategies, indicating a dual engagement with online and community-based modes of intervention. This hybrid approach reflects the contemporary realities of Pacific youth in Aotearoa New Zealand, who navigate cultural traditions alongside digital futures.

It is important to note that while I initiated and helped facilitate the creation of these vision boards, I did so with explicit approval from the participants. Due to time and resource limitations, not all participants were able to respond in time to co-complete their boards, and some contributions had to be interpreted based on prior talanoa and workshop discussions. This highlighted a key tension in this phase: the challenge of

aligning community-centred timelines with institutional demands and submission deadlines. While I strove for full participation and dialogue, I acknowledge that the practicalities of time, energy, and funding shaped what was possible within this stage.

Translating these artefacts and narratives into academic outputs required careful attention to language and cultural nuance. I was acutely aware of the risk of losing meaning in the process of writing up findings for academic or policy audiences. To mitigate this, I adopted a dialogic approach to sense-making, grounding all analysis in the words, metaphors, and frameworks used by participants themselves. Rather than imposing external theoretical lenses, I prioritised Pacific worldviews and co-researcher interpretations, recognising this as an act of decolonial scholarship (Smith, 2021).

Phase Four also functioned as an accountability loop. Returning the research to the community was not simply a dissemination strategy but a necessary form of closure. This involved not only presenting results but asking: What now? How should these findings inform future programmes, policies, and funding for Pacific youth? What did the process mean to those who participated? In creating space for collective reflection, this phase ensured that the research was not extractive but instead remained embedded in relational and ethical responsibility.

In conclusion, Fa'ai'uga ma Fa'asoa **is** a critical phase in which the research journey is collectively honoured, interpreted, and actioned. Through creative methods like vision boards, culturally appropriate dissemination strategies, and community-based talanoa, this phase reaffirms the centrality of Pacific youth voices in shaping the outcomes of research. It also serves as a model for ethical finality - where knowledge is not simply consumed, but shared, repurposed, and reinvested in the people who generated it. This aligns with Pacific research philosophies that centre the ***vā***, co-leadership, and collective flourishing as central to transformative inquiry.

7.3. Evaluation of the TPAR approach

The adoption of Pacific research frameworks, particularly TPAR, contributed significantly to strengthening this study, most notably in ensuring cultural safety, ethical responsiveness, and deep, relational engagement. Grounded in Pacific worldviews, TPAR facilitated a decolonising research approach that prioritised relationships (vā),

reciprocity, and respect. This method enabled the co-construction of knowledge with Pacific youth in ways that honoured their lived experiences, spiritual values, and community obligations. Unlike extractive, one-way modes of inquiry, Talanoa offered space for participants to speak freely, reflect deeply, and engage as equal contributors in the research process. Such dialogic practices not only enhanced the quality of the data but also fostered trust and long-term accountability, attributes often underdeveloped in mainstream methodologies.

However, these strengths encountered certain limitations. The time- and resource-intensive nature of Talanoa presented challenges, particularly when operating within institutional structures driven by efficiency, productivity metrics, and rigid timelines. Developing trust, nurturing relationships, and allowing conversations to unfold organically over time required significant commitment—often clashing with externally imposed project milestones and ethical review processes that do not easily accommodate Pacific relational methodologies. Furthermore, the specificity and depth of context that made Talanoa so rich also complicates its generalisability. While this does not diminish its value, it raises questions for those seeking to apply or measure findings through conventional empirical lenses.

Reflexivity played a critical role throughout this research process. As a Pacific researcher navigating academic spaces and community worlds, I experienced a continual process of learning, negotiation, and growth. My role evolved from data collector to facilitator, cultural broker, and co-learner. This shift required attentiveness not only to the stories of others but also to my own positioning—how my values, relationships, and responsibilities shaped the research. Such reflexive awareness deepened my understanding of the Talanoa methodology as not merely a tool for inquiry, but a way of being and relating within the research encounter. It also surfaced tensions between my obligations to institutional expectations and my accountability to participants, particularly around data ownership, interpretation, and dissemination.

One pressing question that emerged from this study is whether Talanoa can be scaled or institutionalised without compromising its core values. As Pacific methodologies gain recognition and traction within academia, there is both opportunity and risk. While broader adoption may signify progress in decolonising research, there is also concern that institutionalisation could strip Talanoa of its relational, spiritual, and cultural

grounding. Standardisation may inadvertently reframe it as a method divorced from its philosophical and ethical roots. Thus, issues of sustainability must be approached with care: not only in terms of the longevity of Talanoa-based research, but in ensuring that its integrity is upheld. As such, replication must be locally grounded, culturally informed, and led by those embedded within the communities being served. Conclusively, the use of Talanoa in this research reaffirmed the transformative potential of culturally grounded, relational methodologies. It highlighted the power of deep engagement and reflexive practice while calling attention to the structural tensions that must be navigated in ethical, sustainable, and culturally respectful ways.

Research implications

These findings carry important implications for practice. First, they emphasise on the value of mentoring and education tailored for Pacific youth entrepreneurs or aspiring entrepreneurs in the health-based food space. During our talanoa, when we introduced collaborative talanoa session with the use digital platforms such as the use of their own devices and thus, youth enthusiasm soared – confirming that building such capacity is empowering (Caillaud et al., 2025) who found that "empowering … teens to speak up" through skills development was vital. This suggests any follow-up strategy should integrate Pacific-informed entrepreneurship training into schools and community programs. For example, our co-created website or app prototypes could be incorporated into a health curriculum or school project, giving students hands-on experience. Similarly, partnerships with social enterprise incubators, such as The Kitchen Project, could channel funding and mentoring to regional Pasifika food businesses. Such linkages would embed Pacific knowledge systems (e.g. Fa'a Samoa communal decision-making, Fonofale holistic health) into formal entrepreneurship models. Indeed, as one Pacific youth educator noted, social enterprise frameworks can bridge Western and Pacific paradigms, where western people do business and hope it helps the community, in indigenous cultures people work for the community and the business is just a bonus (MPP, 2020). Recognising this, youth mentoring should emphasise collective goals as well as personal growth. Community innovation and health promotion must also be grounded in Pacific epistemologies. The TPAR artefact we built could serve in community workshops or church-based health initiatives such as Enua Ola (Sorenson et al, 2015) demonstrating how traditional Pacific diets can be modernised. In churches or Pacific-language schools, our digital materials (videos,

apps, websites) can initiate talanoa among families about healthy living, fulfilling the Fonofale vision of integrated well-being. I see potential for this artefact to be used in social enterprise spaces as well, for example, a Pacific youth NGO could host our content in entrepreneurial seminar or workshop camps, illustrating the relationship of culture and business. Embedding it in Aotearoa New Zealand education or policy could shift the narrative away from deficit framing of Pacific health, towards youth-led creativity as a resource.

Finally, this work illustrates how Pacific knowledge systems challenge Western entrepreneurship models. Western models often prioritise individualism, competition, and rapid growth. In contrast, our youth-centred findings align with that Pacific entrepreneurs and aspiring Pacific youth inherently value collectivism and social support. For instance, the Pacific Prosperity review highlights that Pacific businesses redistribute profits across a family or community network as a norm (MPP, 2020). This means metrics of success should expand beyond profit to include cultural preservation and community health. Reflecting on our artefact, I realise that future interventions should measure outcomes such as strengthened family ties or revived Pacific language use as valid successes. In practice, this requires policymakers and educators to listen to Pacific voices in the boardroom (MoH, 2015). It also suggests a shift in entrepreneurship education: one example could be the concept of Fa'a Sāmoa enterprising, where chiefs' consensus and family contributions are central. Although, this is yet to be explored. In sum, Pacific-centred entrepreneurship demands models that are not just culturally aware but culturally rooted.

7.4. Conclusion

This chapter has critically examined the four key phases of the TPAR methodology as applied in research with Pacific youth in Aotearoa New Zealand. Phase One, Teu le Vā, explored the importance of nurturing relational space through ethical, cultural, and spiritual preparation. Phase Two, Talanoa, focused on dialogic storytelling as a method for generating deep, participant-led insights. Phase Three, Va'ava'ai ma Fa'atino, illustrated the interpretive and action-oriented dimensions of the TPAR process, highlighting how Pacific youth were positioned as knowledge holders and active contributors to health and enterprise interventions. Phase Four, Fa'ai'uga ma Fa'asoa,

engaged participants in the reflective sharing of findings through dialogic and creative dissemination practices, including vision boards and continued talanoa.

Collectively, these phases demonstrate the transformative potential of TPAR as a culturally grounded and ethically responsive methodology. It offers a way to conduct research with rather than on Pacific youth, foregrounding values of reciprocity, collective agency, and the relational ethics of vā. The methodological approach challenges conventional research paradigms by centring Indigenous voices and affirms Pacific youth as innovators and co-creators of solutions relevant to their health and well-being.

This study contributes to the growing body of methodological literature on Indigenous and Pacific research, offering practical insights into how Talanoa can be used not only as a method of data collection but as a decolonising and TPAR tool. Its application in youth-centred health entrepreneurship research signals a meaningful shift towards participatory, culturally safe approaches. Future research should explore how TPAR can be further embedded into health and education policy, ensuring Pacific youth perspectives inform systemic change. Continued investment in relational, community-led research practices is essential for achieving equitable and culturally resonant outcomes across the Pacific region. Throughout this chapter, I reflected on the TPAR processes and shared insights into how Pacific youth shaped health food entrepreneurship through culturally grounded approaches. This chapter allowed me to critically consider the value of collaboration and the lessons that emerged from the research journey. The next and final chapter of this thesis, Chapter eight, weaves these findings together in a broader discussion and conclusion, highlighting their implications for Pacific youth, health, and entrepreneurship, policy and practice and the future implications, limitations and recommendations.

Chapter 8

Discussion and Conclusion

8.1. Introduction

In undertaking this research, I sought to address the pressing health inequities faced by Pacific communities in Aotearoa New Zealand, where non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular disease remain disproportionately high, discussed in depth in chapter 2 of this thesis (Lin et al., 2018; MoH, 2020). These conditions are deeply connected to a Westernised food system that is comprised with highly processed and energy-dense foods, contributing to poor nutritional outcomes and diminished holistic wellbeing (Puloka & Tiatia-Seath, 2019). As a Pacific researcher, I recognised that Pacific youth, while vulnerable to these health challenges, also represent a generation with the creativity and cultural grounding to reimagine food and health futures through entrepreneurship. However, there has been little scholarship that meaningfully centres Pacific youth voices in this space.

The central aim of my study was therefore to explore how Pacific youth conceptualise, design, and enact food-based fruit and vegetable enterprise that promote health and wellbeing. I was particularly interested in how a TPAR approach could support this process by privileging youth perspectives and grounding the inquiry in Pacific epistemologies. My focus extended beyond identifying structural barriers and opportunities; I sought to work with Pacific youth in co-creating their ideas and underpin this research with the use of the TPAR artefact that could represent pathways for Pacific food entrepreneurship as both a health intervention and a cultural practice.

I argue that Pacific youth health food-based entrepreneurship is significant because it simultaneously addresses urgent health inequities and strengthens cultural identity. In envisioning enterprises rooted in traditional Pacific foods such as taro, bananas, and fresh fish, youth not only resist the dominance of unhealthy food environments but also affirm cultural knowledge and intergenerational continuity (Sefa Dei, 2017; Spiller et al., 2020). This reflects wider movements for food sovereignty and Indigenous entrepreneurship that value collective wellbeing and sustainability above individual profit (Dana & Anderson, 2007).

In this discussion and conclusion chapter, I synthesise the findings of my research across three interrelated themes. First, I examine how Pacific youth framed food entrepreneurship as both a strategy for health promotion and an avenue for economic opportunity. Second, I reflect on the theoretical and methodological contributions of using a TPAR framework to co-create knowledge with Pacific youth and third, I consider the practical implications of this work for policy, education, and community development, before outlining its limitations and areas for future research. Through this chapter, I seek to demonstrate the transformative potential of Pacific youth-led enterprises to shape healthier and more culturally resonant food futures.

The health and wellbeing of Pacific youth in Aotearoa New Zealand remains a significant concern, with high prevalence of diet-related chronic conditions and limited engagement in health-promoting behaviours. The present research aimed to explore how TPAR can support Pacific youth in developing fruit and vegetable enterprises, fostering not only economic participation but also improved nutrition and holistic wellbeing. By centring Pacific ways of knowing and relational practices, this study sought to examine the correlation of youth entrepreneurship, cultural identity, and health promotion.

The overarching aim of this research seeks to explore: “How might Pacific youth in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand be supported to develop fruit and vegetable enterprises and contribute to the health and wellbeing of Pacific communities?

From this primary question, three key sub-questions were developed:

1) What is the existing current and contextual knowledge about Pacific related NCDs, dietary food patterns, and the food system in Aotearoa New Zealand?
2) What are the perceptions and strategies of Pacific youth in Auckland concerning fruit- and vegetable-based entrepreneurship?
3) How can Talanoa, informed by PAR be utilised to support Pacific youth voices and strategies in fruit and vegetable promotion?

This chapter critically discusses the findings of the study in relation to the wider literature, theoretical frameworks such as the Fonofale model of health, and Pacific epistemologies that emphasise relationality, spirituality, and collective wellbeing. The discussion is organised around four key themes: the culturally empowering role of TPAR, the health and nutrition outcomes of youth-led enterprise, youth

entrepreneurship as a site of agency and innovation, and reflections on methodological challenges and limitations. The chapter concludes with a synthesis of the study's contributions, practical recommendations for policy, practice, community, and research, and a final personal reflection on the significance of TPAR in Pacific youth health promotion.

8.2. Discussion

8.2.1. TPAR as a Culturally Safe and Empowering Methodology

In this study, I found that Talanoa, as a relational and dialogic methodology, was essential in creating culturally safe spaces for Pacific youth to explore the intersections of health, entrepreneurship, and identity. As the literature highlights, Talanoa privileges reciprocity, storytelling, and relationality over rigidly structured research tools (Vaioleti, 2006; Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014). This was reflected in my results, where participants emphasised that the openness of Talanoa enabled them to link entrepreneurial aspirations with cultural values and family obligations. In contrast to conventional Western methodologies that rely on pre-determined questionnaires and quantitative outcomes (Smith, 2012), Talanoa supported an emergent and iterative process that aligned with Pacific epistemologies, which regard knowledge as co-constructed and relational rather than extracted (Nabobo-Baba, 2008; Thaman, 2003).

Through the TPAR framework I employed, youth were positioned not as passive research subjects (Russell et al., 2000) but as co-researchers, actively contributing to cycles of reflection, feedback, and enterprise co-design. This was particularly evident when participants connected discussions of health food ventures to lived realities, such as balancing obligations to family, community, and church, or embedding traditional food practices within modern business models. These insights resonate with the principle of teu le vā, which the literature identifies as fundamental to Pacific research ethics (Anae, 2010; Mila-Schaaf, 2006). By honouring these relational spaces, I was able to facilitate deeper trust and participation, which in turn enabled young people to take leadership roles in shaping culturally coherent enterprise strategies.

I also found that Talanoa disrupted hierarchical knowledge production that is often embedded in Western research paradigms. Rather than responding to fixed instruments, youth participants guided the flow of conversations, identified priorities—such as fruit and vegetable initiatives and food waste solutions—and co-created culturally grounded pathways to enterprise development. This process reflected the decolonising potential of Talanoa that scholars have articulated (Naepi, 2019; Smith, 2012), while also affirming participants' agency and leadership. The iterative feedback loops embedded in the TPAR approach enabled youth to refine their enterprise ideas across cycles of talanoa, reflection, and participatory action, strengthening their confidence and sense of ownership. These outcomes align with the literature that links culturally grounded research methods to youth empowerment and resilience (Leenen-Young, 2020; Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014).

By embedding Talanoa within a PAR framework, I was able to bridge storytelling with practical enterprise development. The findings from this research showed that youth were not only narrating their experiences but also producing tangible outputs, such as business plans, fruit and vegetable delivery strategies, and community network maps. This reflects what scholars have argued—that Talanoa extends beyond conversation into action and collective problem-solving (Nabobo-Baba, 2008; Vaioleti, 2006). In this way, my research demonstrates how methodological flexibility grounded in Pacific values can support both cultural safety and innovation, offering a model for youth-led, culturally coherent health entrepreneurship that contributes to both academic scholarship and practical health promotion outcomes.

8.2.2 Health and Nutrition Outcomes through Enterprise

In this study, I found that engagement in fruit and vegetable enterprises emerged as a promising pathway for promoting health and nutrition among Pacific youth. The act of growing, sourcing, and selling fresh produce created both practical and symbolic avenues for reframing health in ways that were culturally relevant. As my results show, enterprise projects not only increased youth access to fruits and vegetables but also enhanced their food literacy and encouraged them to model healthy eating within their families and communities. These findings build on scholarship that highlights the potential of entrepreneurship to intersect meaningfully with public health objectives, particularly in contexts were structural barriers limit access to affordable, healthy food (Dwyer, 2012; Snowdon & Schultz, 2015).

Youth participants in my research demonstrated a nuanced understanding of health, extending beyond biomedical definitions to encompass holistic perspectives. Consistent with the Fonofale model of health (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001), participants linked physical wellbeing to mental, spiritual, and family dimensions. For instance, enterprise activities were described as supporting mental wellbeing through social connection, collective problem-solving, and the pride associated with entrepreneurial success. Spiritual values emerged in the use of traditional planting methods or in practices of sharing produce as acts of service. Family involvement—including mentoring from elders, collaboration with siblings, and intergenerational knowledge exchange—further reinforced relational wellbeing and underscored the cultural continuity embedded in these enterprises. These findings align with literature that emphasises the importance of holistic, culturally grounded approaches to health in Pacific communities (Sotutu, 2019; Tiatia-Seath, 2014).

I also observed that youth enterprises directly addressed structural barriers to healthy eating. In urban Auckland, access to affordable, culturally appropriate produce is often limited, echoing concerns identified in the literature regarding food insecurity and inequitable food systems (Rush et al., 2020; Rush, & Obolonkin, 2020; Utter et al., 2018). Through their projects, participants not only provided fresh produce within local communities but also reported increased nutritional awareness, improved cooking practices, and a heightened sense of responsibility in promoting healthier diets among their peers and families. By embedding nutrition within enterprise activities, youth were able to contextualise dietary knowledge within everyday life, rather than relying on abstract health messaging that often fails to resonate with Pacific communities.

Through the Talanoa Participatory Action Research process, I found that linking enterprise with health outcomes enabled youth to redefine health in culturally and socially coherent ways. Rather than imposing top-down directives, the participatory approach empowered young people to co-design strategies that integrated economic participation with holistic wellbeing. These findings resonate with broader research that demonstrates the effectiveness of community-driven health interventions within collectivist cultural frameworks (Mila-Schaaf, 2006; Smith, 2012). By engaging in entrepreneurship, Pacific youth demonstrated that promoting nutrition can be both a personal and collective endeavour—one that blends innovation, cultural values, and health promotion in meaningful ways.

8.2.3 Youth entrepreneurship pertaining to leadership, innovation, and resistance

In this study, I found that youth entrepreneurship functioned as a powerful platform for expressing identity, autonomy, and innovation while simultaneously navigating structural inequalities. For Pacific youth, enterprise provided a space to challenge the social and economic constraints they face, including limited access to funding, racialised marginalisation, and urban poverty. As my results illustrate, participants who developed fruit and vegetable initiatives were not only engaged in business creation but also exercised agency in shaping their roles within both community and economic landscapes. This reflects a broader narrative of empowerment, aligning with research that frames Pacific youth entrepreneurship as a pathway to reclaim agency in contexts of systemic inequity (Naepi, 2019; Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014).

Intergenerational dynamics were central in shaping these entrepreneurial journeys. Families, elders, and mentors offered guidance, resources, and accountability, while peer networks contributed collaboration, creativity, and support. Within the Talanoa PAR framework I used, these relationships were strengthened through structured spaces for dialogue, reflection, and co-design. This enabled participants to integrate feedback across multiple relational domains, reinforcing what the literature describes as the principle of relational leadership, where agency is not exercised individually but within networks of care, cultural knowledge, and intergenerational continuity (Anae, 2010; Mila-Schaaf, 2006). My findings demonstrate that these dynamics were critical in transforming individual enterprise ideas into collective endeavours that reflected both cultural identity and community values.

I also observed that entrepreneurship operated as a form of creative resistance. By taking leadership roles in food-based enterprises, youth disrupted societal expectations, contested stereotypes of Pacific passivity in economic life, and asserted cultural pride through their practices. The innovations that emerged—from reimagining traditional foods for contemporary markets, to employing social media marketing, to addressing logistical barriers—illustrated the ways in which Pacific youth combined cultural identity with entrepreneurial acumen. These findings resonate with literature that frames entrepreneurship as a site of resistance and cultural assertion, particularly within marginalised communities (Smith, 2012; Dutta, 2016).

At the same time, my research illuminated the tensions between opportunity and constraint. Limited access to capital, infrastructure, and formal support networks restricted scalability, while competing priorities such as education, work, and family obligations shaped the extent of engagement. These constraints reflect the structural barriers identified in the literature as ongoing challenges for Pacific youth in economic participation (Chu et al., 2013; Tiatia-Seath, 2014). Yet despite these limitations, the study revealed the resilience, creativity, and leadership potential of participants. I argue that Pacific youth entrepreneurship should be understood not only as an economic activity but also as a transformative pathway that fosters self-determination, cultural continuity, and community wellbeing.

8.2.4. TPAR Challenges and Limitations

While I found that TPAR was highly effective in fostering youth engagement and supporting the co-design of enterprise outcomes, several limitations shaped the research process. Recruitment was constrained by my existing networks, the competing commitments of youth participants, and the urban-centric focus of the study. As a result, participation primarily reflected the experiences of youth in Auckland and may not fully capture the perspectives of rural, island-born, or gender-diverse Pacific youth, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, resource and time constraints influenced the scale and depth of enterprise development, with some initiatives remaining at pilot or conceptual stages rather than fully operational. These constraints echo challenges noted in the literature regarding the practical implementation of youth-led, community-based initiatives (Dutta, 2016; Naepi, 2019).

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced further complications, requiring adaptations such as online Talanoa sessions, hybrid meetings, and flexible timelines. While these measures allowed continued engagement, they also created variability in the quality of interaction and the depth of relational connection—both of which are central to Pacific participatory methodologies (Vaioleti, 2006; Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014). Similarly, the reliance on self-reported reflections and co-designed documentation posed challenges in objectively evaluating outcomes, such as improvements in nutrition or enterprise profitability, highlighting tensions between participatory approaches and conventional measures of effectiveness.

Methodologically, integrating TPAR required careful attention to both relational and action-oriented components. Balancing cultural safety with research rigor necessitated ongoing reflexivity, negotiation, and responsiveness to participant needs. Ethical considerations—including informed consent, confidentiality, and relational accountability—were foregrounded throughout the process, reflecting Pacific values of respect, reciprocity, and care (Anae, 2010; Pulotu-Endemann, 2001). Despite these limitations, the research produced rich insights into culturally grounded entrepreneurship, youth agency, and health promotion. I argue that these findings provide a strong foundation for future studies to expand reach, scale, and longitudinal impact, while continuing to prioritise Pacific epistemologies and participatory approaches.

8.3. Conclusion

The study demonstrates that Talanoa PAR can effectively support Pacific youth in developing fruit and vegetable enterprises that promote holistic health and wellbeing. By foregrounding relationality, storytelling, and co-design, S created culturally safe spaces for youth to articulate their values, aspirations, and entrepreneurial strategies. Participants engaged actively in identifying challenges, generating solutions, and implementing initiatives, demonstrating agency, creativity, and leadership. This process aligns with the principle of *teu le vā*, emphasizing the nurturing of relational spaces as foundational to both research and enterprise development.

A key contribution of this research lies in illustrating how entrepreneurship can function as a health promotion strategy. Through the cultivation, distribution, and sale of fresh produce, youth enhanced access to nutritious foods, increased food literacy, and modelled healthy behaviours within their communities. These outcomes were not limited to individual wellbeing but extended to familial and communal dimensions, reflecting the holistic perspective of the Fonofale model. By linking enterprise with nutrition, cultural identity, and social engagement, the study highlights the potential for culturally grounded initiatives to address health inequities among Pacific youth.

Moreover, the research underscores the transformative potential of youth entrepreneurship as a site of agency and innovation. Participants navigated systemic challenges, including socio-economic constraints, urban poverty, and limited

institutional support, while exercising creativity in business design and community engagement. Intergenerational mentorship and peer collaboration reinforced relational leadership, illustrating that entrepreneurial success is embedded within networks of care and cultural continuity. These findings resonate with broader literature emphasizing the role of youth-led enterprise in fostering empowerment, identity formation, and social impact.

TPAR also challenged conventional research methodologies by centring Pacific epistemologies, relational accountability, and co-creation of knowledge. Rather than extracting data from passive participants, the approach facilitated active engagement, reflection, and iterative problem-solving. This methodology foregrounded cultural values, storytelling, and experiential learning as central to both research and practice, demonstrating that culturally grounded frameworks can enhance methodological rigor while remaining responsive to participant needs.

The study contributes to Pacific health promotion and youth development by providing evidence for culturally anchored, participatory, and action-oriented approaches. Key findings include: (1) TPAR as a transformative methodology that fosters trust, relational engagement, and leadership; (2) fruit and vegetable-based enterprise as an effective strategy for promoting health, nutrition, and food literacy; (3) Pacific youth as creative critical drivers of entrepreneurship; and (4) the centrality of cultural values in shaping innovation, collaboration, and resilience. While findings are context-specific to urban Auckland, they offer insights applicable to other Pacific communities, particularly regarding the integration of culture, youth and agency in health and enterprise initiatives.

Ethical considerations, including respect for participants, relational accountability, and cultural safety, were paramount throughout the research. Limitations such as urban focus, resource constraints, and COVID-19 disruptions shaped the scope of findings but do not diminish the significance of the study's contributions. Ultimately, the research provides a model for supporting Pacific youth to lead culturally grounded, health-promoting, and economically meaningful initiatives, offering implications for practice, policy, and further research.

8.4. Recommendations

8.4.1 Policy and Practice

Funding policies and procedures

To enable scalable impact, policy interventions should prioritize Pacific youth-specific funding streams for food-based entrepreneurship. Targeted grants, low-interest loans, and start-up incubators can provide youth with the resources needed to launch and sustain enterprises while fostering economic and health outcomes. Policies should recognize the value of culturally grounded methodologies, integrating TPAR principles into health promotion, education, and enterprise development programs.

Structural changes are also essential to address barriers such as limited access to land, urban infrastructure, and distribution networks. Facilitating partnerships between local councils, community organizations, and Pacific youth enterprises can enhance market access and logistical support. Additionally, public health policies should incorporate co-designed, community-led initiatives that reflect youth priorities and cultural values, moving beyond top-down approaches that often fail to resonate with Pacific communities.

Policy frameworks should further acknowledge the intersection of culture, identity, and entrepreneurship. Funding and program design should incentivize approaches that embed relationality, intergenerational collaboration, and cultural practices into enterprise initiatives. By aligning policy with Pacific epistemologies, government and institutional actors can foster environments where youth leadership, innovation, and health promotion are mutually reinforcing, creating sustainable pathways for collective wellbeing.

Health promotion programmes

In practice, youth-focused incubator programs should be rooted in cultural values and Talanoa principles. Mentorship structures, training modules, and TPAR workshops can support youth to develop both business acumen and holistic wellbeing, integrating enterprise with nutrition, community engagement, and leadership development.

Facilitators should be trained to use Talanoa to guide reflective dialogue, support problem-solving, and foster relational accountability.

Schools, churches, and community hubs provide ideal spaces for embedding co-designed health and enterprise projects. Integrating fruit and vegetable initiatives into educational curricula, church programs, and local community projects allows youth to experiment with enterprise in safe, supportive, and culturally resonant contexts. These environments can also facilitate peer-to-peer learning, skill sharing, and the normalization of healthy food practices.

Mentorship programs should prioritize relational approaches that respect cultural values and family connections. Experienced entrepreneurs, elders, and health professionals can provide guidance, encouragement, and practical support while ensuring that youth agency and leadership remain central. By combining skill development with culturally safe facilitation, practitioners can create sustainable and meaningful pathways for youth to engage in health-promoting entrepreneurship.

8.4.3 For Pacific Communities and Youth Networks

Pacific communities and youth networks play a pivotal role in sustaining entrepreneurial initiatives and promoting health literacy. Strengthening peer-to-peer networks and collective engagement can foster shared learning, mutual support, and collaborative problem-solving. Youth-led collectives provide spaces for experimentation, feedback, and celebration of achievements, reinforcing agency and resilience.

Intergenerational collaboration should be encouraged within family, church, and cultural settings. By integrating elders, parents, and community leaders into enterprise activities, youth gain access to cultural knowledge, mentorship, and social support. These collaborations also reinforce cultural continuity and community cohesion, ensuring that enterprise initiatives are embedded within relational and collective frameworks rather than being purely individualistic endeavours.

8.4.4 Future Research

Future research should adopt longitudinal and comparative designs to examine the long-term impacts of youth-led food enterprises on health, economic outcomes, and social wellbeing. Expanding TPAR projects to other regions and Pacific subgroups, including

rural, Pacific island-born, and gender-diverse youth, can enhance understanding of contextual factors and methodological transferability. Further research should continue to integrate culturally grounded approaches, exploring how Pacific methodologies can inform sustainable health promotion, youth development, and community-driven enterprise.

Sustainability of youth-led health and food entrepreneurship initiatives

While the co-designed artefact demonstrates strong potential for engaging Pacific youth in entrepreneurial activity, sustaining these enterprises beyond initial engagement remains a critical challenge. Youth-led enterprises are often vulnerable to fluctuating motivation, limited access to capital, and constrained business mentoring opportunities, which can reduce long-term viability if not adequately supported. In both urban Suva and Auckland contexts, sustainability is closely linked to the availability of enabling ecosystems, including culturally responsive mentorship, ongoing community partnerships, and access to training and financial literacy support. Without these structures, initial innovation may not translate into sustained enterprise development. Literature on Indigenous and Pacific development emphasises that long-term success is often dependent on embedded collective support systems rather than individual capability alone (Durie, 1998; Smith, 2012). Furthermore, Pacific research methodologies highlight the importance of relational continuity and culturally grounded support in maintaining engagement over time (Vaioleti, 2006). Future research could therefore explore how co-designed Pacific youth enterprise models can be integrated into broader institutional, community, or policy frameworks to ensure continuity, scalability, and long-term wellbeing outcomes.

8.4.5. Final Reflection

Through my engagement with Pacific youth using TPAR, I came to see more clearly the transformative potential of culturally grounded, relational methodologies for health and entrepreneurship. Supporting youth-led fruit and vegetable enterprises revealed to me the deep intersections of culture, identity, and wellbeing, and I observed how empowerment emerges when knowledge, action, and community are woven together (Vaioleti, 2006; Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014). This experience strengthened my commitment to Pacific-led participatory approaches, particularly TPAR, which I

found invaluable for centring relationality and storytelling as means of nurturing youth participation, empowerment and holistic wellbeing (Smith, 2012; Naepi, 2019).

From my perspective, I argue that there is a pressing need for a coordinated and culturally responsive policy and practice collaborative effort to sustain Pacific youth fruit and vegetable enterprises. I contend that government ministries, including the Ministry for Pacific Peoples, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment—must work in genuine partnership with Pacific youth. Targeted funding, curriculum integration, market access, and culturally aligned mentorship are crucial to building enterprises that promote both economic empowerment and health (Mila-Schaaf & Hudson, 2009; MoH, 2020). Most importantly, I witnessed Pacific youth as engaged leaders who have helped potentially influence and shape policy and digital innovation, through TPAR ensuring that initiatives remain culturally resonant and holistically sustainable across generations (Tamasese et al., 2010).

By aligning government strategies with Pacific youth initiatives, fruit and vegetable social enterprises can become a strategic tool for good health outcomes, cultural engagement, and economic empowerment. Ministries provide policy, financial, and structural support, while youth contribute innovation, cultural knowledge, and leadership. This coordinated ecosystem addresses gaps in current health and education strategies and creates opportunities for sustainable, culturally relevant impact.

Recommendations / Limitations

Study Context

In reflecting on this study, I acknowledge that it did not fully capitalise on the opportunity to examine how Pacific youth-led enterprises might directly reduce the impact of NCDs. My focus was primarily on the entrepreneurial and cultural dimensions rather than on health outcomes. While youth participants identified digital tools such as mobile devices and food health apps as important, I did not fully explore their transformative potential in reshaping food choices in homes and communities (Grimmett et al., 2019; WHO, 2020).

Representation of Pacific Youth

Although this study included Tongan, Samoan, and Cook Island Pacific youth, it does not represent the full diversity of Pacific communities in Aotearoa or the wider region. Each community holds distinct cultural knowledge, food practices, and health challenges (Mila-Schaaf & Hudson, 2009). Future studies should extend representation to other Pacific groups to enrich the breadth and depth of perspectives.

Methodological Reflections

Employing TPAR required me to hold firm to Pacific values of relationality, reciprocity, and storytelling. At times, I found myself negotiating between Pacific epistemologies and Western analytical frameworks, particularly during data analysis. While TPAR provided the flexibility to privilege youth voices, I acknowledge that methodological consistency could have been strengthened through more explicit Pacific-led analytical tools (Smith, 2012; Vaioleti, 2006). For example, this study centred Pacific youth voices, but incorporating intergenerational perspectives (elders, families, or church leaders) could provide another Pacific analytical layer. Frameworks such as Teu le Vā (Anae, 2016) emphasise how youth innovation is situated within broader family and cultural relationships.

Policy and Practice Considerations

A significant limitation was the absence of political voices. This was a deliberate choice, as I wanted to avoid diluting Pacific youth perspectives with political rhetoric. However, excluding policymakers also limited the capacity to situate youth-led initiatives within the broader policy environment. Political voices could provide insight into systemic barriers and opportunities for structural change (Baum et al., 2009).

Limitations of Scalability and Transferability

This study is situated within specific social, cultural, and geographic contexts, as the initial phase of the research was conducted in urban Suva, Fiji in 2018, with subsequent development and refinement occurring within Pacific youth communities in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. Both settings represent urban Pacific environments; however, they differ in population density, migration patterns, and access to institutional and entrepreneurial support systems. Auckland, specifically, provides a concentrated Pacific demographic and established community infrastructures that shape health, wellbeing, and entrepreneurship opportunities in ways that may not be directly comparable to other contexts (Durie, 1998; Vaioleti, 2006). The co-designed health food entrepreneurship artefact TPAR approach are therefore embedded within relational, cultural, and urban Pacific lenses that support intensive engagement processes.

While the TPAR demonstrated effectiveness within these settings, its scalability may be constrained by the time, trust-building, and culturally responsive facilitation required for meaningful participation. Extending this approach to larger populations or non-urban Pacific contexts would likely require significant adaptation and resourcing. Furthermore, transferability beyond Auckland and Suva should be considered cautiously, as Pacific communities vary across regions in socio-economic conditions, mobility, and access to support systems (Smith, 2012). Incorporating both Fiji and Aotearoa contexts strengthens the study's depth but also highlights the situated nature of its findings'.

Recommendations

From these reflections, I make the following recommendations for future research and practice:

Link Youth Enterprises with NCD Prevention

Future studies should explicitly explore how Pacific youth-led food and beverage enterprises contribute to reducing NCD risk factors, including dietary behaviours and access to healthy food. This would strengthen the connection between entrepreneurship, health promotion, and equity outcomes.

Examine Digital Health Interventions

Research should investigate how mobile apps, e-commerce platforms, and social media can support Pacific youth in transforming food choices and influencing health outcomes. Digital innovations are particularly relevant given the centrality of technology in young people's lives.

Expand Representation Across Pacific Communities

Including Cook Islands, Niuean, Tokelauan, Tuvaluan, Kiribati and other Pacific groups will capture a fuller picture of Pacific youth realities and allow for culturally tailored interventions that reflect community-specific values and contexts.

Strengthen Pacific-led Methodological Frameworks

Building on TPAR, scholars should develop analytical approaches that remain faithful to Pacific epistemologies, ensuring that cultural integrity is maintained throughout research design, data analysis, and dissemination.

Integrate Political Perspectives Carefully

Future studies could incorporate policymakers and political stakeholders as part of the research process, ensuring that youth perspectives remain central while also enabling structural advocacy and systemic policy reform.

Concluding Reflection

While these limitations highlight areas where the study could have been strengthened, they also open valuable opportunities for future inquiry. This research has confirmed for me that Pacific youth are not only agents of change but also visionaries capable of reimagining health, food, and entrepreneurship in culturally grounded ways. By connecting youth innovation with systemic policy, digital tools, and broader Pacific representation, future research can build on this foundation to advance both health equity and youth empowerment across generations.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Ethics approval letter 1

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

10 September 2020

Cath Conn
Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences

Dear Cath

Re Ethics Application: **20/230 Health entrepreneurship among Pacific youth in South Auckland: Using Talanoa based participatory action research in the co-design of fruit and vegetable-based enterprises**

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 in stages** for three years until 9 September 2023.

Non-Standard Conditions of Approval

1. Removal of bullet points 4 and 5 in the Consent Form; being identified is part of the research and therefore not a choice while the issue of images, videos etc. is covered in other bullet points.

Non-standard conditions must be completed before commencing your study. Non-standard conditions do not need to review by AUTEC before commencing your study but please send updated form for our file.

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: losi.sa'u.lilo@aut.ac.nz; Radilaite Cammock

Appendix B – Ethics approval letter 2

18 May 2022

Cath Conn
Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences

Dear Cath

Ethics Application: **20/230 Health entrepreneurship among Pacific youth in South Auckland: Using Talanoa based participatory action research in the co-design of fruit and vegetable-based enterprises**

On 9 September 2020 you were advised that your ethics application was approved.

We would like to remind you, that it was a condition of this approval that you submit to AUTEC the following:

- A brief annual progress report using the EA2 Research Progress Report / Amendment Form, available at http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics/forms, or
- A brief Completion Report about the project using the EA3 from, which is available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics/forms. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 9 September 2023 or when the project is completed;

It is also a condition of approval that AUTEC is notified if the research did not proceed or any adverse events occurring during the research. If there has been any alteration to the research, (including changes to any documents provided to participants) then AUTEC approval must be sought using the EA2 form.

To enable us to provide you with efficient service, please use the application number and study title in all correspondence with us. If you have any enquiries about this application, or anything else, please contact us at ethics@aut.ac.nz.

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

The AUTEC Secretariat
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: losi.sa'u.lilo@aut.ac.nz; Radilaite Cammock

Appendix C – Participant information sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

07 07 2020

Project Title

Health entrepreneurship among youth in South Auckland, New Zealand: Using Talanoa based participatory action research in the co-design of fruit and vegetable-based enterprises

An Invitation

Talofa Lava, Fakaalofa lahi atu, Ni sa Bula Vinaka, Malo e lelei and Warm Pacific greetings,

My name is Losi Sa'uLilo, and I am a PhD student based at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) and I am conducting my research in South Auckland, New Zealand. You are invited to take part in a PhD study where you will have the chance to share your interest or experience in health-related entrepreneurship.

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this research is to develop an understanding about your interest and experiences in the health and food industry particularly fruits and vegetables, explore healthy eating enterprises using social media and digital technologies and learn more about the impact this has on current food systems and Pacific people's health and well-being.

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

You were identified for this research as you are an individual who is aged 18-45 years who meets the research criteria of being a fruit and vegetable entrepreneur, or with an interest in this area. Some of you were identified with from a previous research project conducted in early 2018, the information evening and/or by having responded to the advert provided by the researcher, Losi Sa'uLilo.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you are interested in taking part in this research, please let me know. I can be contacted in Auckland, New Zealand: Losi Sa'uLilo losi.sa'u.lilo@aut.ac.nz or 09 921 9999 x7869. A consent form is included for you which must be signed before any Talanoa sessions commence.

What will happen in this research?

Over a period of four to eight weeks, we will meet as a group on four occasions. The first session will involve a talanoa session to introduce the team to the study; conduct team building exercises; and exercises in use of digital media. The term talanoa for this research refers the open-ended ease of conversation in a comfortable and safe environment where you can share and express your ideas. The second session will involve sharing experiences of fruit and vegetable entrepreneurship, which may involve methods of video making and discussion as chosen and agreed by the individuals within the group. The third session will involve coming up with some proposals or ideas for actions that you might want to take to promote your fruit and vegetable-based enterprise. We will be asking you to test out 1 of those actions over a period of a 1 month. I'll ask you to record the experience of testing out the action(s) that you have chose**n**. For example, if you decide to set up a social media blog, I would then ask you to make notes about this experience, perhaps by keeping an audio or visual diary, or making a short film, or taking photographs and recording notes in writing. After 1 month I will arrange a further session for us to follow up and share together our experiences of testing out these actions. We will then produce final materials which aim to summarise our ideas and suggestions. These final materials are likely to be in the form of short story digital video, photographs, or a blog. During this study, each Talanoa session

will take a minimum of 45 minutes of up to 2 hours long where refreshments will be provided. You will also be reimbursed for travel and/or pre-paid top up cards.

What are the discomforts and risks? How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

No discomfort or risk is anticipated for you. There may be a small risk of discomfort with the sharing of real-life stories, ideas and enterprise strategies among other participants. Should you experience discomfort or uneasiness, during any Talanoa sessions then we can stop it immediately. This will include turning off the audio-tape. Please be aware that the materials produced by this research, and the final report will identify you by name. But, you will have the opportunity to review and approve or refuse any such materials before they are made public. The reason for the identity of participants being known is that the research aims to support Pacific youth as leaders in promoting fruit and vegetable eating.

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?

This research is an opportunity for you to express your ideas and thoughts around health entrepreneurship in New Zealand. The aim of this research is for you to have an empowering experience, by offering opportunities to contribute to your confidence and capacity in the fruit and vegetable health based related industry and support in digital technologies and communications. The results of this study will contribute to increased knowledge in this area at the national level for example contributing to a model for promoting fruit and vegetable eating through youth led entrepreneurship. It is envisaged the researcher will gain knowledge and experience working with inspirational Pacific peoples from hearing about their ideas and experience in health in the space of food, health and health entrepreneurship in relation to the public health agenda.

How will my privacy be protected?

Your information will be used specifically for the purposes of this research. Although your name will be identified and referred to by others in the Talanoa sessions. You will be encouraged to maintain confidentiality for others and to use at your own discretion in what you share within the group if you have any concerns. Your identity will be stated in the final report and in the materials, such as video, photos or blogs. However, you will be given the opportunity to review and approve these materials before they are made public.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

The biggest cost to you is your time as you will be asked to attend 3 group Talanoa sessions of up to 2 hours per Talanoa sessions, over a period of 3 weeks, and then a further group meeting 1 months later. Refreshments will be provided during each Talanoa session and you will be reimbursed for travel. Funding for the costs associated with this research will be supported by the AUT School of Public Health and Interdisciplinary Studies.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

As a possible participant you will have 2 weeks to consider the invitation to participate. If during this time you have questions that arise you can contact me at the email address below.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

You will receive a 3-page summary of findings that will be sent to you for feedback and comments. Any publications from this research will be circulated among all participants and lastly at the end of the study, the final thesis will be made publicly available by AUT via online depository.

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 Cath Conn, cath.conn@aut.ac.nz, +64 921 9999 x7407

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, Dr Carina Meares, ethics@aut.ac.nz , +64 921 9999 ext 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:

Losi Sa'uLilo
Email: losi.sa'u.lilo@aut.ac.nz
Ph: +64 921 9999 x7869
Auckland University of Technology
(AUT)
School of Public Health and
Interdisciplinary Studies
Faculty of Health & Environmental
Sciences
Private Bag 92006
Auckland 1142
New Zealand

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Dr Cath Conn
Email: cath.conn@aut.ac.nz
Ph: +64 921 9999 x7407
Auckland University of Technology
(AUT)
Associate Head of School
School of Public Health and
Interdisciplinary Studies
Faculty of Health & Environmental
Sciences
Private Bag 92006
Auckland 1142
New Zealand

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 10 Sept 2020, AUTEC Reference number 20/230.

Appendix D – Participant Consent and Release Form

Consent and Release Form

[For use when photographs, videos or other image recording is being used]

Project title: Health entrepreneurship among youth in South Auckland, New Zealand: Using participatory action research Talanoa in the co-design of fruit and vegetable-based enterprise

Project Supervisor(s): Dr Cath Conn, Dr Radilaite Cammock and Togialelei Dr Safua Akeli Amaama

Researcher(s): Losi Sa'uLilo

- ○ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 07 07 2020.
- ○ 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 consent to my full name being used for the purpose of this research including the images, short videos, digital stories, summary report, PhD thesis and publications

  (please tick one): Yes○ No○
- ○ I wish to be identified by name in this study

  (please tick one): Yes○ No○
- ○ 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 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 permit the research project to use the photographs and videos that are part of this project and/or any drawings from them and any other reproductions or adaptations from them, either complete or in part, alone or in conjunction with any wording and/or drawings solely and exclusively for (a) the research project academic outputs; and (b) educational exhibition and other dissemination works; and (c) all forms and media for advertising, trade and any other lawful purposes as stated in the Information Sheet.
- ○ I understand that any copyright material created by the photographic sessions is deemed to be owned by the research project, commissioned as stated in the Information Sheet and that I do not own copyright of any of the photographs or videos.
- ○ 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 10th Sept 2020 AUTEC Reference number 20/230

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form

Appendix E - Research Agenda and Key Questions

Initial introductory Talanoa session 1;

Relationship building; Icebreakers and information about the project

Project Title: *Health entrepreneurship among Pacific youth in South Auckland, New Zealand: Using participatory action research Talanoa in the co-design of fruit and vegetable-based enterprise*

Project Supervisor: Dr Cath Conn

Researcher: Losi Sa'uLilo

Date:

Participant Characteristics

1. Gender:

Male: _____ **Female:** _____

2. Age:

3. Current place of residence:

_____

Town/City:

_____

4. Name of Business:

_____

5. Business Address:

_____

6. Role in Business:

_____

7. Nature of Business:

_____

Key indicative questions for Talanoa session 2;
Talanoa / Storytelling and design

Project Title: *Health entrepreneurship among Pacific youth in South Auckland, New Zealand: Using participatory action research Talanoa in the co-design of fruit and vegetable-based enterprise*

Project Supervisor: Dr Cath Conn

Researcher: Losi Sa'uLilo

Date:

1. How and why did you start your fruit and vegetable business? Telling your story

Supporting questions: *What inspired you to start your business? What is your passion in life? What does healthy eating mean to you?*

2. Who are your biggest motivators as an entrepreneur?

Supporting questions: *What are your biggest motivators as an entrepreneur or a person of interest in the field of fruit and vegetables?*

2. What are your biggest challenges as an entrepreneur?

3. How does your business/entrepreneurship help improve health and well-being?

4. Have any local or national organisations helped you build your business?

Supporting questions: *If so, how did they help with your business? Have they continued supporting your business? Why or why not? Ideally, which organisation do you need most help from? Why?*

Social Media Talanoa:

The social media Talanoa workshop will comprise of topics including the public health problem in South Auckland, New Zealand, New Zealand health statistics, government and non-government agencies involved in health promotion initiatives and campaigns, statistics with digital media, the different types of social media sites and the benefits and challenges of using these digital forums for business settings. As well as a discussion about internet-based apps that can support their fruit and vegetable-based enterprise. Thereafter, the

participants will have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the digital mobile apps identified and practise using these apps individually or as a group. At the end of this session, they then select a desired prototype to use for their fruit and vegetable-based enterprise to test out over a 1-month period. Photos and video recordings will be taken at these workshops solely for the purpose of their digital stories and the summary report for the participants at the end of this study. Refer to appendix 6 for photography and videography protocol.

Appendix F - Research Agenda and Key Questions - 2

Key Indicative questions for Talanoa session 3;

Act and Observe

Project Title: *Health entrepreneurship among Pacific youth in South Auckland, New Zealand: Using participatory action research Talanoa in the co-design of fruit and vegetable-based enterprise*

Project Supervisor: Dr Cath Conn

Researcher: Losi Sa'uLilo

Date:

1. What are your ideas around developing fruit and vegetable-based enterprises?

Support questions: *How can these be implemented? How would these be best supported in this area?*

2. What are the barriers to implementing your ideas? What are the strengths of implementing a healthy eating fruit and vegetable-based enterprise?

3. What support is needed with your fruit and vegetable business enterprise?

4. How can social media or digital platforms help you with your business enterprise?

Appendix G - Research Agenda and Key Questions – 3

Indicative questions for Talanoa session 4;

Reflect and Share

Project Title: *Health entrepreneurship among Pacific youth in South Auckland, New Zealand: Using participatory action research Talanoa in the co-design of fruit and vegetable-based enterprise*

Project Supervisor: Dr Cath Conn

Researcher: Losi Sa'uLilo

Date:

1. What has it been like being a part of this research?
2. What have you learned from the social media workshop/co-researchers working together?
3. What did you experience using this enterprise?

Support questions: *What were the strengths and weaknesses of using this enterprise? What challenges did you face? How could you improve your enterprise selected? What would you do differently? How could you be better supported with your enterprise for the future?*

4. How can social media or digital platforms help you with your business? For example, Facebook, Instagram or any other type of social media platform?
5. How does your business/entrepreneurship help support the public health issues in today's society such as type 2 diabetes, for example Pacific empowerment to promote healthy lifestyles?
6. How could the food systems in New Zealand support your ideas and enterprise as an entrepreneur?

Appendix H – Research Confidentiality Agreement

Confidentiality Agreement

For someone transcribing data, e.g. audio-tapes of interviews.

Project title: Health entrepreneurship among Pacific youth in South Auckland, New Zealand: Using participatory action research Talanoa in the co-design of fruit and vegetable-based enterprise

Project Supervisor: Dr Cath Conn

Researcher: Losi Sa'uLilo

- ○ I understand that all the material I will be asked to transcribe and/or translate is confidential.
- ○ I understand that the contents of the tapes or recordings and notes can only be discussed with the researchers.
- ○ I will not keep any copies of the transcripts nor allow third parties access to them.

Transcriber's signature:

.....……

Transcriber's name:

.....……

Transcriber's Contact Details (if appropriate):

……..

……..

……..

……..

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 10th Sept 2020 AUTEC Reference number 20/230

Note: The Transcriber should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix I – Research Invitation Flyer

An invitation to participate

Research Title:

Health entrepreneurship among Pacific youth in South Auckland, New Zealand: Using participatory action research Talanoa in the co-design of fruit and vegetable-based enterprise

This research aims to:

'Explore youth entrepreneurs or aspiring entrepreneurs' experiences of promoting vegetable and fruit eating and their proposals for future promotion of vegetable and fruit eating'

The research will focus on your experiences, ideas and the local food system by drawing on valuable business examples that promote healthy eating and incorporate digital media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram

If you are between 18 to 45 years of age, are interested in fruit and vegetable entrepreneurship or are an entrepreneur working with fruits and vegetables,

We would like to hear from you 😊

For more info, please contact the researcher;

Losi Sa'uLilo, AUT School of Public Health and Interdisciplinary Studies, Ph: 09 921 9999 x7869, E: losi.sa'u.lilo@aut.ac.nz

Appendix J - Photography and videography protocol

Photography and videography protocol

- All photos and videos will be used for the sole purpose of this research for example digital stories of the entrepreneurs
- Photos and videos will only include peoples and objects relevant to the fruit and vegetable-based enterprise of the entrepreneur
- Photos/images and videos that include persons from the general public who have not consented to their photograph being used for the purpose of this research will not be used for any purposes related to this research
- The researcher will be responsible for taking photos and recording videos.