

***You've just got to think
about your family and
what type of person you
want to be.***

Listening to young Pasifika people in the youth justice system and their families

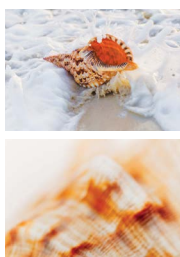


RESEARCH AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Folasaitu Associate Professor Julia Ioane
Massey University School of Psychology (Clinical Psychology)**

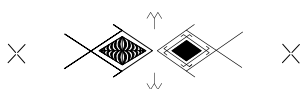
Funded by the Health Research Council of New Zealand

SUPPORTING GRAPHICS
THROUGHOUT THIS REPORT:



The conch shell is used by Pacific to signal and call people to come together. In Samoa, it is used to signal prayer and family time, and then in the morning to show the dawn of the new day.

This research is a call for those working in youth justice to come together, listen to the voices of our Pasifika people to create a new dawn, a new way of working.



This graphic, created by Rayna Phillips, was featured on an award given to each young person at the Fiafia night for their participation. Fish show a meeting of individuals, incorporating Tongan (Tokelau Feletoa) and Samoan (Malu) motifs together, symbolising the acts of contributing Koloa (Treasure) and Protection. The flanking Fetu (stars) note points of navigation and the mirrored manu (birds) show a turning point for current and future youth.

Special acknowledgement

This report is for all the participants involved in this research. May your experiences be the light that is needed to lead the way for working with our Pasifika youth in the justice system.

The report also acknowledges funding from the Health Research Council and the leadership and guidance from Advisory group members (Aiolutepotea Sina Aiolutepotea-Aiono, Analaupulou Cullen, Professor John Horwood, Professor Ian Lambie, Judge Ida Malosi, Steve Pasene, Inspector Peter Stokes); Dr Ruth Allen and the research team, Eleanor Chan Boon-Hunt and Rayna Phillips; and Fa'amatua'inu Pereira for providing a cultural review of the report.

Fa'afetai tele lava, Malo 'aupito, Fakaue Lahi, Fakafetai, Fakafetai Lasi.

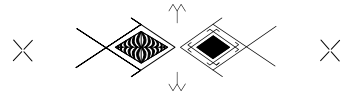
Dedication

This report is dedicated to the late Emeritus Professor David Fergusson for his leadership as the journey began, and the late Mafi Leo, one of the mothers who gave her time graciously to this study.

Citation

Ioane, J. (2023). *You've just got to think about your family and what type of person you want to be*. Listening to young Pasifika people in the youth justice system and their families. Research and recommendations. Health Research Council of NZ and Massey University School of Psychology.

Graphic design and layout by Jenny Reid Design.



Contents

Executive summary **4-6**

What we did 7

How did we do it? **9**

Introduction to findings **11**

What we found 14

Information from questionnaires **16**

What we heard 20

Summary of findings 34

What do we do about it? 35

Recommendations **36**

Appendix **39**

References **40**





Executive summary

What we did

Understanding the views and experiences of Pasifika youth and their parents/caregivers about mental health and wellbeing was the key focus of this research. Due to the overwhelming numbers of Pasifika youth in the justice system, alongside the over-representation yet under-reporting of Pasifika youth in mental health, these two areas were merged to:

1. Explore mental health problems and substance use among Pasifika youth with offending behaviour.
2. Examine culture, family and spirituality and their association with mental health.
3. Understand the experiences of the youth justice system for Pasifika youth and how they came to offend.

How we did it

This was **by** Pasifika, **for** Pasifika and **with** Pasifika research. The lead researcher is Samoan Pasifika, the research was for our Pasifika communities, and with our youth justice Pasifika communities. The approach was Pasifika right from the outset, and included guidance from Pasifika advisory group members. We used Pasifika research approaches and protocols of engagement. We concluded the research with a Fiafia night to honour all our participants.

Participants included 24 justice-involved young people (aged 15 to 17) and 23 parents/caregivers also gave their insights and opinions. We met with participants over 3 years.

What we found

Mental health, which includes emotional (e.g., anxiety) and behaviour problems (e.g., rule breaking), were not reported as major issues, though parents were still concerned about their child's wellbeing. Of note, the words 'mental health' had a range of meanings for Pasifika youth and their aiga/families unrelated to standard 'medical' meanings. Cultural understanding of mental health was generally in relation to the spiritual world. Economic hardship was a key factor that negatively affected mental health. Substance use (mainly alcohol) was a significant problem, alongside hanging out with friends who were also in trouble with the law (and not going to school). Aiga/family was important for Pasifika youth, though this was quite tricky, given the difficult environments many were raised in. Half the young people attended church; however, this was also tricky given the judgements from other church members and the difficulty in engaging when there was a lot of stress going on.

Experiences of the youth justice system were both positive and negative. Key drivers of crime began with wanting money to respond to basic needs for food, alongside a desire for status, sensation-seeking and just not thinking about the consequences of their actions. However, they stopped offending when there was a) a change in motivation and mindset, b) the value of aiga/family changed, and c) they had access to programmes and staying in school.

What does it mean?

More needs to be done for our Pasifika youth and their families to change their pathway away from the justice system. This includes a targeted response to mental health and developing therapeutic interventions that are aiga-based to address cultural resources and aiga relationships; peer-based to address alcohol/substance use and staying in school; and well-targeted combinations to address emotional and behavioural problems, cultural identity and spirituality. Economic and financial wellbeing must improve for our Pasifika youth and their aiga. A Va service delivery framework is needed to prioritise and promote relationships, as understood by Pasifika communities. Responding to and mitigating the risk of Pasifika youth offending behaviour requires complex, innovative and ground-breaking solutions that are led by Pasifika people, yet implemented by all involved.

E tatau ona e mafaufau I lou aiga ma se tulaga lelei e tatau ona iai lou tagata.

Faalogologo i manatu o tupulaga talavou o le Pasifika ma o latou aiga o loo lalo o le vaavaaiga a le faamasinoga mo tupulaga talavou.

Aotelega faapitoa

Galuega faatino

O le autu o le nei suesuega o le fia maua lea o se malamalamaaga i finagalo o tupulaga talavou o le Pasifika, o latou matua/ma e o loo tausia i latou i gasegase o le mafaufau ma le soifua maloloina. Talu ai ona o le maua luga o le fuainumera o tupulaga talavou o le Pasifika o loo aafia i le tulafono, aemaise foi o le toatele o loo aafia i gasegase o le mafaufau ae le o lipotia, ua tuu faatasia ai vaega nei e lua faapea:

1. Suesue ni aafiaga o le gasegase o le mafaufau, ma fualaa faasaina i tupulaga talavou o le Pasifika o loo aafia i soligatulafono.
2. Suesue tulaga o le aganuu, aiga ma le soifua faaleagaga ma o latou fesootaiga ma gasegase o le mafaufau.
3. Malamalama i aafiaga o le faamasinoga a tupulaga talavou mo tupulaga talavou a le Pasifika ma mafuaaga na mafua ai ona solitulafono.

Faapefea ona faatino

Faatino e Pasifika, mo Pasifika faatasi ai ma tagata suesue mai le Pasifika. O le o loo taiulu i le suesuega o le Samoa mai le Pasifika, o le nei suesuega na faatinoina mo tagata o le Pasifika faatasi ai ma alo ma fanau a le Pasifika o loo lalo o le vaavaaiga a le faamasinoga mo tupulaga talavou. O auala o fesootaiga na faaogaina tulaga masani a le Pasifika, mai lava i le amtaga, faatasi ai ma le lagolagosua a se komiti faufautua a le Pasifika. Sa faia foi se fiafia tele e taua luga ai o le faamoemoe, ma faafetaia ai sui uma na gapatia i le suesuega. O nisi o sui e aafia ai le 24 o i latou o loo iai aafiaga i lalo o le faamasinoga a tupulaga talavou (15-17 tausaga) ma le 23 o matua/poo i latou o loo tausia tupulaga talavou.

Tulaga na maitauina

O gasegase o le mafaufau e aafia ai ma faalogona (polepole vale) ma faafitauli tau i amioga (solitulafono), e lei lipotia o ni tulaga na faapopoleina ai matua, ae sa taua pea iai latou le soifua maloloina o a latou fanau. Mo le silafia, o le faaupuga gasegase o le mafaufau e eseese ona faauigaina e tupulaga talavou o le Pasifika ma o latou aiga, e lei foi se fesootaiga ma le gagana masani faafomai. O le malamalamaaga faaleaganuu o tagata Pasifika i gasegase o le mafaufau, e faasino lea i agaga. O le utiuti o le tamaoiga o se tasi lea o vaega e aafia tele ai le gasegase o le mafaufau. O le faaogaina o fualaa faasaina (aemaise lava le ava) o se tasi lea o faafitauli, faatasi ai ma le mafuta atu lea i isi tupulaga o loo aafia i le tulafono (e le o i ni aoga). E taua le aiga i tupulaga talavou o le Pasifika, ae o lona faafitauli o le faigata tele o le siosiomaga na tutupu mai ai le toatele o i latou. O le afa o tupulaga talavou e mafuta atu i tapuaiga faalelotu, ae o lona faafitauli o lagona ua faamasinoina ma tusitusi lima tagata lotu iai latou, ma le faigata ona fesootai i taimi o faafitauli.

E iai tulaga lelei ma tulaga faaletonu o le faamasinoga a tupulaga talavou. O se tasi o vaega taua na mafua ai ona aafia i solitulafono o le manaomia lea o ni seleni e faatauina ai mea masani pei o meaai, faatasi ai ma le manatu i le fia siitia lea o lo latou tulaga, e aunoa ma se mafaufau i le taunuuga o a latou gaioiga. Peitai, na faamutalia a latou uiga solitulafono ina ua a) faaosofia le mafaufau mo se suiga fou e) ua iloa le taua o le aiga ma le i)ua maua avanoa e mafuta atu ai polokalame ma faaauau aoga.

O le a le uiga?

E tele galuega e manomia ona faatino mo tupulaga talavou o le Pasifika ina ia liliueseina i latou mai ni aafia i le matagaluega o faamasinoga. E tatau ona iai ni polokalame faatatau i gasegase o le mafaufau faatasi ai ma le atinaeina o ni polokalame e faamalosi ai le taua o aiga, ma saili ni auala e faaleleiina ai le va ma isi tupulaga, e faaitiitia ai le tagofia o le ava malosi ma fualaa faasaina aemaise o le tiai aoga; o ni polokalame autu ma talafeagai o le a aoga lea i faalogona, amio faaalii, faasinomaga faapea le itu faaleagaga. O se polokalame e faavae sona taiala i le taua o le VA, e manaomia lea mo le faatauina o le va fealoai ma isi, faapei ona masani ai tagata o le Pasifika. O le tali atu, ma le faaitiitia o tulaga amatia o tupulaga o le Pasifika i soligatulafono, e manaomia ai ni metotia, ao ni auala fou e taitaiina e tagata Pasifika, ae lagolagoina e tagata uma.

Email: J.Loane@massey.ac.nz

Kuopau keke fakakaukau'i ho famili, pea ko ho'o fiema'u keke hoko koha tokotaha fefee.

Ko e fanongo ki he to'utupu Pasifiki 'i he fakamaau'anga ma'ae to'utupu, pea mo honau ngaahi famili.

KO E FAKAMA'OPO'OPO FAKAKATOA

KO E NGAUE NE MAU FAKAHOKO

Ko e tefito'i kaveinga 'o e fakatotolo mo e fekumi koeni ke fakamahino'i 'a e ngaahi a'usia moe vakai 'a e to'utupu Pasifiki mo 'enau ngaahi matu'a/kau tauhi, fekau'aki mo e fokoutua fakae'atamai. Koe'uhi ko e fu'u tokolahi fau 'a e to'utupu Pasifiki 'oku haa 'i he fakamaau'anga fakataha mo e tokolahi 'o e to'utupu Pasifiki 'oku nau fokoutua fakae'atamai, ka 'oku 'ikai ma'u ha lipooti kiai, na'e fakataha'i ai 'a e ongo kaveinga ni 'o pehe:

1. Fakatotolo'i 'a e ngaahi palopalema ki he fokoutua fakae'atamai, pea moe ngaue'aki 'a e faito'o kona tapu moe ma'u 'o e kava malohi 'ehe to'utupu Pasifiki 'aia 'oku nau ma'u 'a e 'ulungaanga fakamamahi mo maumau lao.
2. Vakai ki he ngaahi 'ulungaanga 'a e matakali Pasifiki, fakafamili moe tui fakalaumalie, pea mo 'enau fekau'aki moe fokoutua fakae'atamai.
3. Ke mahino'i 'a e founa ngaue 'a e fakamaau'anga ma'ae to'utupu Pasifiki pea moe founa ne nau maumau'i ai 'a e lao.

KO E FOUNA NGAUE NE MAU FAKAHOKO

Na'e fakahoko 'a e fakatotolo moe fekumi Pasifiki ni 'ehe kau Pasifiki, ma'ae kau Pasifiki. Ko e taki 'i he kau fakatotolo ko e tokotaha Pasifiki, ko e Ha'amoia, pea ko e fakatotolo moe fekumi ma'a hotau kainga Pasifiki pea mo e kainga Pasifiki 'ihe fakamaau'anga ma'ae to'utupu. Ko e ngaue ni na'e fakahoko 'ehe kau Pasifiki pe meihe kamata'anga, 'o kau ai 'a e fale'i meihe kau memipa 'o e kulupu fale'i Pasifiki. Na'a mau ngaue'aki 'a e ngaahi 'ulungaanga faka'apa'apa 'a hotau matakali Pasifiki 'ihe ngaahi fakatotolo moe fekumi ne mau fakahoko. Na'a mau tatuku'aki 'a e fekumi mo e fakatotolo ni 'a e efiaki fakafiefia ke fakalangilangi'i katoa 'a kinautolu kotoape na'a nau kau kihe ngaue ni.

Ko kinautolu na'e kau he ngaue ni, ko e to'utupu 'e toko 24 meihe ta'u 15 ki he ta'u 17, 'aia na'e 'iai 'enau fekau'aki mo e fakamaau'anga, pea mo e matu'a/tauhi 'e toko 23 na'e tanaki mai 'enau ngaahi vakai moe 'enau fakakaukau. Na'e laka 'ihe ta'u 'e 3 'emau fakataha mo e ni'hi koeni.

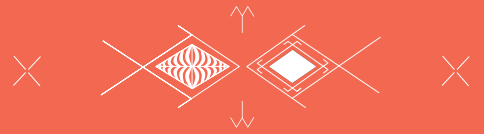
NGAAHI ME'A NE MAU MA'U

Ko e fokoutua fakae'atamai, 'oku kau ai 'a e loto hoha'a (hange ko e lotomo'ua) mo e palopalema faka'ulungaanga (hange ko e maumau lao), pea na'e 'ikai lipooti ia koha ngaahi palopalema 'oku fu'u mamafa, neongo na'e kei hoha'a pe 'a e ngaahi matu'a kihe mo'ui lelei 'enau ngaahi fanau. 'I he 'ene pehe, ko e fo'i lea ko e "fokoutua fakae'atamai" 'oku lahi hono ngaahi faka'uhinga'i 'e he to'utupu Pasifiki mo honau ngaahi famili mo e kainga, 'o 'ikai fetaulaki ia mo e ngaahi 'uhinga totonu fakafaito'o. Ko e mahino'i 'e hotau matakali kihe fokoutua fakae'atamai 'oku fa'a taku 'oku fekau'aki kihe ngaahi tui fakalaumalie. Ko e faingata'a'ia faka'ekonomika koe 'uhinga lahi tokua 'oku ne uestia 'a e mo'ui lelei fakae'atamai. Ko e ngaue'aki 'o e ngaahi faito'o kona tapu (lahi taha kihe kava malohi) ko e palopalema lahi ia, tanaki atu kiai 'a e feohi mo e ngaahi kaungame'a pe maheni 'oku nau kau mo kinautolu he maumau lao (pea 'ikai ma'u ako). Ko e famili moe kainga na'e mahu'inga 'aupito ia kihe to'utupu Pasifiki, neongo na'e 'ikai sia'aa koe'uhi ko e ngaahi 'ataakai faingata'a na'e 'ohake ai 'a e to'utupu tokolahi. Ko e vaeua 'o e to'utupu ne nau ma'u lotu, kaikehe ne toe ngali kehe 'eni, koe'uhi ko e ngaahi fakamatala ne ma'u meihe kau memipa 'o e siasi pea moe ngaahi faingata'a ke fai ha fakataha 'ihe lahi 'a e ngaahi mafasia e loto 'ihe ngaahi me'a na'e hoko.

Ko e ngaahi a'usia 'a e to'utupu he fakamaau'anga na'e fakatou fakafiemalie mo 'ikai fakafiemalie. Ko e tefito'i 'uhinga lahi 'o e faihia na'e kamata 'i he 'enau fiema'u ha pa'anga ki he 'enau ngaahi fiema'u kihe me'atokoni, koe fiema'u tu'unga, moe ngaahi fiema'u kehe, kae 'ikai kenau fakakaukau ki he ngaahi faingata'a tenau iku kiai, koe'uhi ko'enua fai 'a e ngaahi maumau lao. Ka neongo ia na'e ngata 'enau maumau lao 'i he haa 'a e ngaahi liliu, ko e (1) liliu 'enau taumu'a mo 'enau tokanga, (2) ko 'enau fakamahu'inga'i 'a e famili mo e kainga na'e makehe pea (3) na'a nau ma'u 'a e faingamalie ki he ngaahi polokalama pea nau ma'u ako foki.

KOEHA LEVA E 'UHINGA

'Oku lahi fau 'a e ngaahi fiema'u ke fakahoko ki he 'etau to'utupu Pasifiki mo honau ngaahi famili, ke liliu 'enau ngaahi founa ke fakamama'o meihe fakamaau'anga. 'Oku kau heni 'a e ngaue fakahangatonu kihe tokanga'i 'a e fokoutua fakae'atamai, pea mo e fakahoko 'a e ngaahi tokoni 'a e famili 'o makatu'unga 'ihe nofo hotau matakali moe nofo 'a kainga; mo e fakatokanga mo toe tokanga'ange 'a e to'utupu ke fakamama'o meihe kava malohi pea moe faito'o kona tapu, pea kenau hoko atu 'a e ako, pea mo e ngaahi tokoni kihe ngaahi palopalema fakaeloto mo e palopalema faka'ulungaanga 'ihe nonofo 'a e famili mo e tui fakalaumalie. Ko e tu'unga faka'ekonomika mo fakapa'anga kuopau ke fakalakalaka ma'ae to'utupu Pasifiki mo honau ngaahi famili. 'Oku fu'u fiema'u 'a e ngaue 'a e Va ke 'uluaki fakahoko mo tu'uaki 'a e fengaue'aki 'aia 'oku mahino kihe ngaahi komiuniti Pasifiki. Ko e ngaue ke holoki 'a e maumau lao 'a e to'utupu Pasifiki, 'oku fiema'u 'a e tokanga mo e ngaue 'osikiavelenga 'oku taki 'ehe kakai Pasifiki, 'aia 'oku fakahoko 'e kinautolu kotoa 'oku kau mai kiai.



What we did

This section introduces the rationale for this research and its aims, namely to understand the views of Pasifika young people in the justice system (and their parents/caregivers) on mental health and its association with culture, family and spirituality, and with their offending behaviour. Pasifika approaches included the Talanoa engagement model to build rapport with participants and parents/caregivers to complete baseline questionnaires and interviews and then follow up once or twice more. The concept of Va that underpins the research is outlined and the impact of COVID-19 noted.



Why did we do this research?

The health and wellbeing of our Pasifika youth who offend remains a risk to our communities.¹ A focus on Pasifika youth in the justice system must be prioritised, as their behaviour has wider implications for the community in terms of risk and safety, the physical and psychological harm that affects their victims and the families of both the victims and the young people who offend. There can be a significant financial toll on the health, education and justice systems trying to address their needs and mitigate the outcomes of their offending. There are, therefore, ongoing calls to address the issues for Pasifika youth, using approaches that are within Pasifika worldviews.²

In general, Pasifika youth in Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ), despite their resilience in the face of discrimination and adversity, are more likely to have higher levels of unmet mental health needs than do non-Pasifika. In Aotearoa NZ and abroad, Pasifika youth are less likely to access services,³ partly due to ethnic discrimination by health professionals.⁴

Once involved in offending, the risks increase. Research shows that the rate of mental health disorders is higher among all young people in youth justice settings than in the general population.⁵ So, Pasifika youth are one of the most vulnerable and at-risk groups within the offending population with higher levels of mental health issues, yet many of their needs are unmet within forensic settings. Therefore, the mental health needs of this unique group of Pasifika youth in the justice system are not well understood.

This research sought to address this gap, and provide evidence to lead, guide and inform policy, health promotion and intervention programmes.

This is a piece of research by Pasifika, for Pasifika and with Pasifika peoples that honours the principles and values of Pasifika people in Aotearoa NZ.

What do we already know about Pasifika youth in the justice system?

Most studies on young people in the justice system show that they are more likely to be male than female,⁶ disengaged from education,⁷ and with high rates of mental health issues.⁸ Substance abuse is a common feature for young people engaged in offending behaviour,⁹ alongside their association with friends who also end up in the justice system.¹⁰ They have a tendency to come from intergenerational families of offending¹¹ and parental separation.¹²

This is the same for Pasifika youth, although they are more likely to come from lower socio-economic communities than other young people who offend.^{1,13} Pacific research shows they are more likely to offend with peers than alone.¹⁴ Also, some research shows that their first known offence is more likely to be for an action classified as violent, compared to the first known offences of non-Pasifika young people.¹

The importance of culture and identity has been identified as a protective factor amongst Pasifika youth in general² and was therefore explored in this research. The concept of Va is often mentioned and prioritised across Pasifika research and practice,^{15,16} it was also relevant in this research.

What did we want to know?

We wanted to understand the views of Pasifika young people in the justice system (and their parents/caregivers) about mental health and wellbeing and its association with culture, family and spirituality, and with their offending behaviour.

We also wanted to know whether these views changed over time as the young people progressed through the youth justice system.

Aims

Through hearing from our Pasifika young people and their parents/caregivers, the aims of the research were to:

1. Explore mental health problems and substance use amongst Pasifika youth with offending behaviour.
2. Examine culture, family and spirituality and their association with mental health.
3. Understand the experiences of the youth justice system for Pasifika youth and how they came to offend.

How did we do it?

We interviewed Pasifika youth in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland who had engaged in offending behaviour, and their parents/caregivers. We planned to meet with them two or three times, and also asked them all to fill in various questionnaires over 3 years.

Pasifika approach

It was vital this research used Pasifika approaches to better connect with our participants and support them to feel safe to talk. The voices of any young people involved in the justice system are seldom heard; even more so with Pasifika young people. The establishment of an advisory group that consisted of Pasifika and non-Pasifika leaders in justice and the community was crucial to the integrity of this research. We used a number of recognised Pasifika research approaches:

- ◆ This research was framed by the **Fonofale model**,¹⁷ which recognises that wellbeing for Pasifika people is grounded in their aiga (family) and protected by their culture. The relationships between physical, mental, spiritual and other elements (e.g., gender, age) also highlight the different aspects of health.
- ◆ The principles of the **Kakala framework**^{18,19} provided a step-by-step process of the various stages of the research using the metaphor of a Tongan garland.
- ◆ **The Talanoa method**²⁰ is contextualised within a Samoan worldview of a talanoaga and talanoa depending on the nature of the meeting and those involved. Talanoa is defined as oral and verbal communication amongst Tokelauan, Fijian, Tongan and Samoan communities.²¹ A talanoa is the verbal conversation, often seen as casual and informal. A talanoaga was woven into this. Talanoaga is a noun ('to talanoa') in the Samoan culture, and highlights a formal and focused meeting, given the nature of the topic being discussed.
- ◆ A **Fa'afaletui approach** was also embedded as the research drew on various perspectives to enhance its integrity.²² This included the voices of the young person, parents and the community through the establishment of a research advisory group.

- ◆ Finally, a **Talanoa engagement model**²³ was used as a guide to relationships in the Fa'afaletui. The Talanoa engagement model is values-based, drawing instinctively on values of respect, love, humility and reciprocity—underpinned within the context of the Va. The concept of Fa'afeiloa'i (introduction) was first done by observing the environment with participant(s). This introduction provided the space for the interaction and relationship to guide the process. Language was also used to emulate respect and love in our engagement. Pasifika protocols of engagement that included prayer, an expression of gratitude to those in attendance, an apology to acknowledge the value of humility and the sacred space of the participants' home and their time, including a meaalofo (koha/gift) were all implemented throughout each talanoaga. These protocols were contextualised and implemented age-appropriately with the young person and their parents/caregivers.

Who did we talk to?

Each participant (young person) and their parent/caregiver were identified by the following:

- Self-identified as having Pasifika ancestry
- Currently engaged in the youth justice system.

The youth justice system covers mostly those aged 14 to 18 years old. Meetings were held with Oranga Tamariki and Police Youth Aid in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland to outline the research, confirm matters of ethics and confidentiality (formal ethics approval had already been given by all relevant organisations) and aid with recruitment for the study. Lay advocates were also advised, with one lay advocate joining the research team to enhance recruitment. The general process for recruitment included the lay advocate or social worker seeking interest from the young person and/or the parent/caregiver. If there was interest, a talanoaga was scheduled for the lay advocate or social worker and Dr Ioane to meet with the young person and their parent/caregiver.

Dr Julia Ioane led the research, with support from Massey University and the Health Research Council, research team members and an advisory group.

How did we talk to them?

The Talanoa engagement model was used to inform all talanoaga with all participants. The purpose of the first talanoaga was to build rapport with the young person and their parent/caregiver and to confirm their interest. Subsequent talanoa were then held separately: 1) with the young person, and 2) with their parent/caregiver.

Phase 1 provided baseline interviews and Phases 2 and 3 (about one year apart) provided an opportunity to explore changes (if any) of the young person's health and wellbeing during and after their involvement in the youth justice system.

All talanoaga and interviews were participant-led in terms of time and location. They were audio-recorded (with participants' permission), and confidentially transcribed for analysis.

Questionnaires

As part of the talanoaga, questionnaires were used (in person) with the young person to explore culture and identity (Pacific Identity Wellbeing Being Scale-Revised PIWBS-R),²⁴ physical and mental health (Child Behaviour Checklist CBCL),²⁵ spirituality (World Health Organization Quality of Life – Spirituality, Religious and Personal Beliefs WHOQOL-SRPB)²⁶ and a custom-made questionnaire^a to explore substance use, peers and offending behaviour, including recidivism. The CBCL was also used with parents and appropriate translation was undertaken when requested. See the *What we found* section for more detail on the questions asked.

a. This questionnaire was developed by Professor John Horwood who at that time was the Director of the Christchurch Health and Development Study (CHDS).

Introduction to findings

Before we discuss the findings of the research, context is needed. Firstly, we discuss the Va, and secondly, the impact of COVID-19. More and more Pasifika research acknowledges the Va in its method and methodology^{27,28} or in its research findings.²⁹ In this research, the Va was present throughout all aspects of the project. COVID-19 occurred in the midst of the research and changes had to be made to the timing and access to participants, to accommodate this global pandemic.

Concept of Va

Va is a concept understood amongst Samoan,³⁰ Fijian (tabu),³¹ and Tongan communities (tauhi va).³² It is seen as a space that relates to and governs the relationships between people, land, community and cosmos. The Samoan context of the Va broadly underpins this research and was observed and heard about in the voices of participants. As we spoke with our participants and analysed our findings, the three areas of the Va were actively in play (see Figure 1 and Table 1).

Va is a cyclic relationship with three dimensions that are interchangeable and agile.³³ Teu le Va and tausi le Va are often used synonymously;³⁴ however, for the purposes of this research, we have separated the two.

A relationship has a beginning that is teu le Va—establishing and building a relationship. Tausi le Va draws on that relationship being nurtured and cared for, in order to maintain the malie (sweetness) of the Va. Tausi le Va is often seen as the most significant dimension, given that this is where values such as love, respect, care are traditionally practised.³⁵ At some point, the relationship will experience a moment of disconnection or disharmony or even a violation that is soli le Va (breach of the relationship). Currently, there is minimal literature about this area of Va, though it has been explored.

All offending occurs within soli le Va. It immediately exists between the person who has carried out the offence and the person who has been harmed.³⁵ Soli le Va also exists between (a) the person who has carried out the offence and their own aiga/family; and (b) the person who has carried out the offence and the aiga/family of the person who has been harmed. In addition, given the collective identity of Pasifika people, there is (c) the aiga/family of the person who carried out the offence has soli le Va with the aiga/family of the person who has been harmed.

Given the focus of this study, the Va was also discovered within the context of the young person and their Va with (a) their parent/caregiver and (b) the youth justice system.

In Table 1, examples of the dimensions of the Va in the research interviews give a flavour of how they were enacted.

Figure 1. Dimensions of the Va

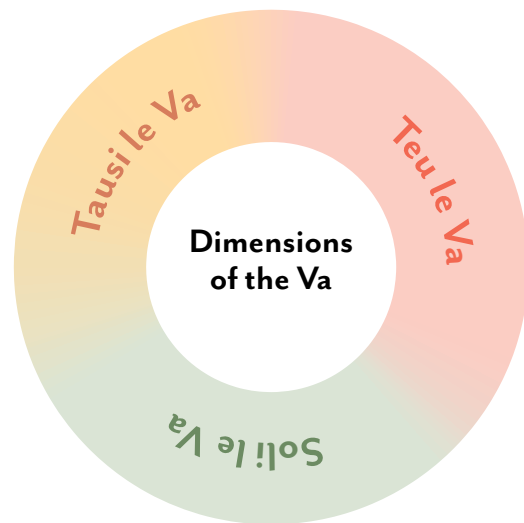


Table 1. Dimensions of the Va in the research

| Dimensions of the Va | Participant comments |
|---|---|
| <p><i>Teu le Va – Establish and build the Va</i> Here, participants outline ways to connect, including getting alongside the young person through ways of talking, sharing personal experiences, sports/activities and so on.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I believe that with social workers, I believe if you bring yourself down and just let the social worker bit to the side, just talk to the young person. (Parent) • [The social worker] was real awesome because he found a connection with [my son] so they bonded really quickly and he shared personal experiences with my son making it easy for him to open up. (Parent) • I've gotta be comfortable with them [a mentor], like, I don't know, [if they] play sports [or share similar interests]. (Young person) |
| <p><i>Soli le Va – Breaching of the Va</i> Participants gave examples of the Va being breached in the way news of a child's offending was delivered irresponsibly, without any introduction of who was calling or why. Conflictual relationships between family members or with apparently uncaring staff also breached the Va.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just calling [her mother] up and saying, 'Blah blah blah', that's not how you introduce it, it's like from their end a bomb dropped into their laps, so culturally it was irresponsible. (Parent) • Mum yelling in the past ... and then mum beginning to control and control her leo (voice/temper). (Young person) • [Social workers] say, "Oh yeah, we care about you" and this and that and then I'm just sitting there thinking it's a load of rubbish because, at the end of the day, they walk out that door and they're just going to forget about me. (Young person) |
| <p><i>Tausi le Va – Nurture the Va</i> The relational aspect is highlighted here as participants talk about nurturing a Va between themselves and professionals, including in court where they were made to feel part of a family by officials who spoke their language. It was important for parents to see those working in the system building a connection and nurturing a relationship with their child while in the system.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We ended up friends, you know, because he still checked upon on [my son] and that's what's needed. (Parent talking about mentor) • Yeah, and that's how we felt, that's how I felt in the beginning when I walked into that room, it had that family-oriented environment, you know, that [sense of] awe where everyone is one. (Parent) • The support I had, the people that were around me helping me ... They were always checking up, like always texting, ringing, asking if I'm all right and stuff, yeah. They would sometimes come pick me up and we would go out. (Young person) |

The reason why young people enter the justice system can be understood within a cultural context of *solu le Va*. They have breached or violated the sacred space that relates by causing harm to another person, property and/or land. As a result, part of their journey in the justice system is to find ways to restore this violation with *tausi le Va* and *teu le Va*. Whilst this did occur for our young people, they also experienced times in which *solu le Va* occurred within their own relationships with the justice system. This is explored further in the section on *What we heard*.

Let's talk about COVID-19

Despite best-laid plans, COVID-19 led to changes in our research timeline and having to do some *talanoa* by phone. At the same time, we explored the impact of COVID-19 on our participants given the discrimination and adversities faced by Pasifika people in Aotearoa NZ during this time.³⁶

Parents/caregivers in the study reported having an abundance of food packs, and support with their needs such as accommodation and electricity. Some were unable to work due to the restrictions and therefore they were able to spend more time at home with their children, without the stresses of food and bills.

Most of the young people in the study reported their disbelief in COVID-19 while still following the rules. However, there were a handful of young people who continued to associate with their friends and go outside of their 'bubble'. During interviews, they were adamant that they did not reoffend and their association with friends was more to 'hang out'.

'It was a blessing' (Parents/caregivers)

More relationships ma kamaiki, o mai fai le loku, fai le kalagoa, faikau le Tusi Paia fai makou Bingo. There were more relationships with our children, we did worship together, we talked, we read the Bible and we played Bingo.

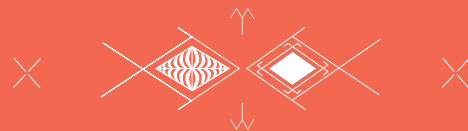
Kusa ou ke faaigoaga le Koviti lea ga oso gei o faamanuiaga, Koviti o faamanuiaga. I have called this Covid as a blessing, a Covid of blessings.

'It's fake' (Young people)

Corona's fake, if it was airborne then everyone would have died.

I didn't believe the virus ... but I still followed the rules.

It's fake. I think COVID-19 is fake, that's what I think...[people] created a virus.



What we found

This section first outlines who we spoke to (and where they are from). Then, information from the questionnaires is summarised, ranging from emotional and behaviour problems, substance use and peer associations (rated on the Child Behavior Checklist and customised questions), to measures of wellbeing, spirituality and identity (rated on the Pacific identity and Wellbeing Scale and the WHO Quality of Life (Spirituality, Religion and Personal Beliefs) scale. The questionnaires were completed together with the participants in person (or by phone call during COVID-19), once connections/ relationships had been established (teu le Va).



Who are they? Where are they from?

◆ Young people: 24 young people participated in the study (see Figure 2).

- 17 were of Samoan descent **(70%)**
- 4 were of Tongan descent **(17%)**
- 7 of the participants were also of other Pasifika and non-Pasifika ethnicities (Niuean, Tokelauan, Tuvaluan, European, African American) **(29%)**
- 3 of the participants were Māori/Pasifika **(13%)**
- 21 were male, 3 were female.

◆ Parents/caregivers: 23 parents/caregivers participated in the study.

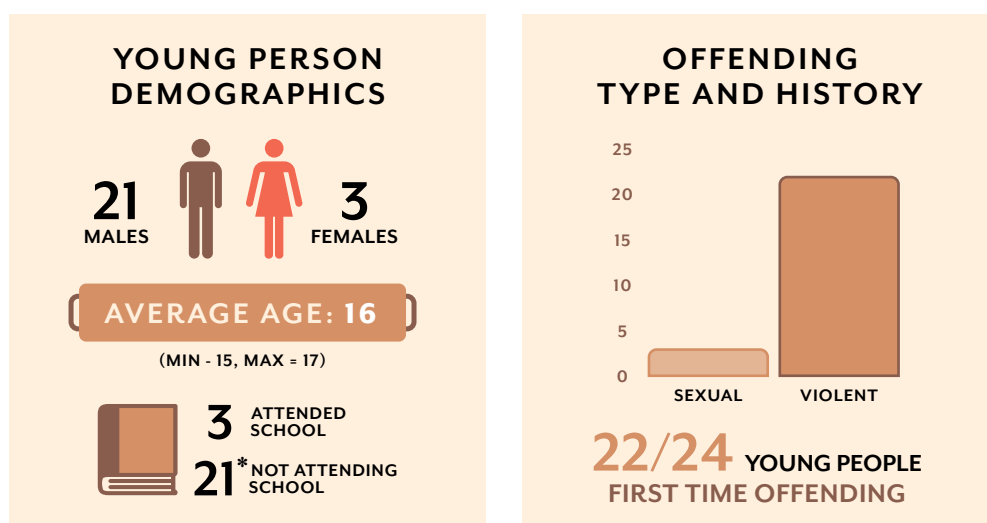
- 18 were of Samoan descent **(78%)**
- 4 were of Tongan descent **(17%)**
- 1 was of Tokelauan descent **(4%)**
- 4 of the other participants were also of other Pasifika and non-Pasifika ethnicities (Niuean, Tokelauan, Tuvaluan, Māori) **(17%)**
- 22 were female and 1 was male. In some cases, a participant's male partner was present while the interview was going on at home, though their contribution was minimal as they tended to leave the responses to their wife/partner.

◆ Most of the young people were born in Aotearoa NZ; 3 were born in Samoa and 1 was born in Tonga.

◆ Abuse: 16 out of the 24 youth reported emotional abuse and half of the youth also reported physical abuse.

◆ Offending: This was the first known offence for 92% (22) of the young people; and their offences were mainly categorised as violent.

Figure 2. Demographics of Pasifika youth



* NOTE: Of the 21 classified as not attending school, 1 did attend on and off, but overall missed more days than were attended.

Parents/caregivers

Twenty-three parents/caregivers participated in the research. Two of the parents/caregivers had children involved in youth justice, though their children did not engage in the study due to being overseas or in a secure facility outside of Auckland. Fifteen out of the 23 parents/caregivers were born in the islands; therefore, most of the young people in this study were first generation NZ-born. Nineteen out of the 23 parents/caregivers were in fulltime employment, typically within manufacturing and hospitality industries.

Eight out of the 23 parents/caregivers were still together, highlighting that most of the young people in the study came from single-parent homes or homes with a step-parent. Five parents/caregivers had criminal histories and about four had had experiences of incarceration (it was hard to get detailed justice-involvement histories from everyone), and about six young people had siblings previously or currently involved in the justice system.

Information from questionnaires

The Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL)²⁵ asks parents and young people separately to rate items on 1) mental health/emotional and behaviour problems; 2) substance use; and 3) association with peers. There are 113 items to rate as 0: **Not true (as far as you know)**, 1: **Somewhat or sometimes true**, or 2: **Very true or often true**. Examples include: 'Hangs around with others who get in trouble'; 'Drinks alcohol without parents' approval'; 'Breaks rules at home, school, or elsewhere'; and 'Sudden changes in mood or feelings'. The custom-made questionnaire developed for this research was used to ask about ethnicity, substance use and peers. Young people were asked whether **None, Some or Most** applied to statements like: 'My friends get into trouble with the law/police' or 'My friends help to keep me out of trouble'. The Pacific Identity and Wellbeing Scale-Revised (PIWBS-R)²⁴ was used to explore wellbeing, spirituality and identity (see Appendix 1), supplemented with questions about spirituality from the WHOQOL-SRPB²⁶ (e.g., To what extent can you find spiritual strength in difficult times? From 1: **Not at all** to 5: **An extreme amount**).

Mental health - emotional and behaviour problems

Mental health, which includes emotional (e.g., anxiety, depression) and behaviour problems (e.g., violence, rule breaking) were not reported as major issues though parents were still concerned about their child's wellbeing. Not unusually in the CBCL, parents reported their children had more problem behaviours than did the young people themselves.

Over time, there was an overall reduction in the behavioural and emotional problems reported by parents/caregivers or the young person. The largest reduction was in the rule-breaking behaviour. This suggests that, over time, the young people that remained in the study appeared to have reduced their emotional and behavioural problems compared to when they first started the research. However, there were still some that reported mental health and behavioural problems as an issue by the end of the study.

Substance use

Substance use was a problem for the young people in this research. On the questionnaire developed for the purposes of this research, during the period of offending, 14 young people (58%) reported using substances that included cigarettes, alcohol and cannabis, and 54% (13) admitted to being under

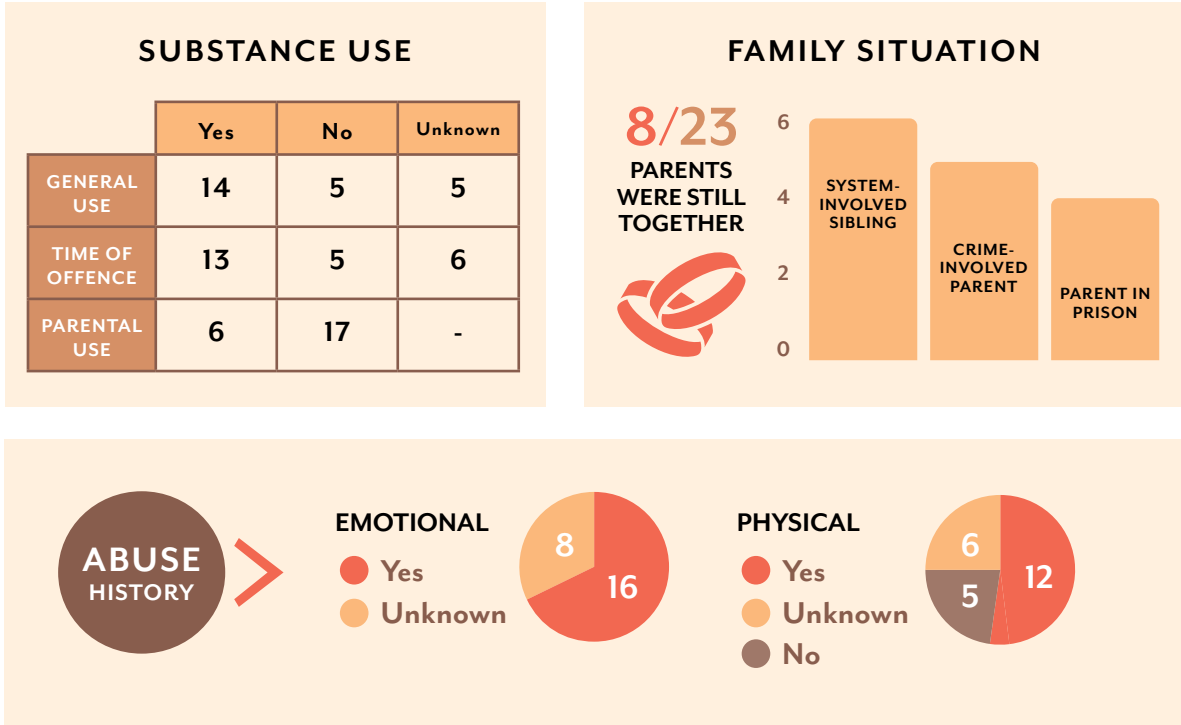
the influence of a substance at the time they offended (Figure 3). When asked about substance use since their involvement in Court, or in the past six months, more than half of the young people were engaged in substance use such as smoking cigarettes (77%, 17) and drinking alcohol (59%, 13) and nearly one-third reported that they drink to get drunk ‘a lot’ or ‘all of the time’. Half of the young people reported using cannabis (50%, 12) and two reported using other illicit drugs.

Around one-quarter (26%) of the parents/caregivers were involved in substance use (Figure 3).

Association with peers

Hanging out with friends who were in trouble with the law as well as using illegal substances was another issue for the young people in this research. On our questionnaire, some or most of the young people had friends who smoked cigarettes (91%, 20), drank alcohol (86%, 19) and would also drink alcohol to get drunk (86%, 19). Half reported that their friends had substance abuse problems (50%, 11). Interestingly, just under half reported that their friends were in trouble with the law (45%, 10), yet some or most of their friends also helped them stay out of trouble (68%, 15). (Total here is *n* = 22, as 2 young people did not fill in this part of the questionnaire.)

Figure 3. Background of Pasifika youth and parents/caregivers during period of offending



NOTE: Substance use refers primarily to use of alcohol and cigarettes by the young people and parents.

Ethnicity

Young people were asked to describe their identity/ethnicity and were then asked, ‘What does it mean to be Samoan/Tongan/[that identity]?’.

Some of the participants highlighted, in their own way, the struggles faced by Pasifika people in Aotearoa NZ. Overall, there was pride in being of Tongan, Samoan and/or other Pasifika descent, though at the same time this was linked with drinking alcohol or fighting behaviour. Some did not know what it meant to be of a certain ethnic culture and connected more to a gang identity or simply did not know. Table 2 shows young people’s responses. ‘Palagi’ refers to European New Zealanders and overseas Europeans.

Table 2. Young people commenting on ethnicity

| Ethnicity | Participant comments |
|-----------|---|
| TONGAN | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Palagi don't struggle, Polys struggle. [Polys = Polynesians]</i> • <i>It's a privilege ...Tongans are tough, Tongans have a big heart.</i> |
| SAMOAN | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>[To be Samoan is to be] on top of Tongans ... Hard head ... Talo – we cook it better ... You've got to be a drinker, it's just in the blood.</i> |
| 'PACIFIC' | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I don't know. I'm just proud that I have like another culture that I can speak.</i> • <i>Don't really identify with my family's culture [more connected to gang].</i> • <i>I have no idea.</i> |

The Pacific Identity and Wellbeing Scale-Revised²⁴ was filled out by the young person to explore their identity and wellbeing (see Appendix). There was strong positive association between a young person's report of **(a) satisfaction with relationships, (b) being respected and happy within their family, and (c) satisfaction about society**. Overall, there were moderate to strong positive associations identified by the participants on all of the Pacific Identity factors.

Wellbeing, spirituality and identity

These aspects were measured by the Pacific Identity and Wellbeing Scale-Revised²⁴ and the questions about spirituality from the WHOQOL-SRPB.²⁶ Half of the young people in the study reported going to church and there was a strong correlation between church attendance and overall spirituality. Young people who felt they have the right resources to fit within a Pasifika cultural environment were much less likely to be reported as having behavioural problems. This suggests that **access to cultural resources is a protective factor to mitigate the risks of behavioural problems**.

There was a positive association between wellbeing, spirituality and identity, though this was weakly associated with their self-reports of emotional and behavioural problems. The young people who reported a highly positive sense of wellbeing with spirituality and identity were also identified by their parents as having fewer behavioural problems (according to survey scores). The more closely connected a young person reported being to their culture, the less likely their parents saw them as having significant problems. **This suggests that young people who feel strongly connected to their culture are less likely to have behavioural problems.**

Young people who reported having strong cultural resources, satisfaction within their family and feeling connected to spirituality were reported by parents as having fewer emotional and behaviour problems. This suggests that **access to cultural resources, satisfaction within family and the role of spirituality appears to mitigate emotional and behavioural problems amongst youth with offending behaviour.**

Interventions involving access to cultural resources, improved family relationships and being connected to spirituality (e.g., church) are likely to reduce problem behaviours and improve a positive sense of one's identity and wellbeing as a Pasifika person.

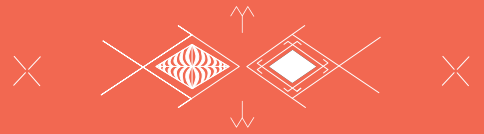
Where are the young people now?

◆ By the end of the study in 2022:

- 12 out of 24 were in employment
- 5 had a partner and children of their own
- 1 had a partner
- 1 had returned to school
- 1 was diagnosed with a mental health disorder and in treatment
- 1 was not engaged in activities or employment
- 4 had reoffended and remained in the justice system (including 1 of those who had children).

According to this research, the official reoffending rate for study participants was low. However, in some cases they had self-reported further offending since their involvement in Court or in the past 6 months. It was likely that these self-reported offences were not known to Police or to the justice system.

By the end of the 3-year study, justice system outcomes for 5 participants were not known; they were largely from transient families and/or families engaged in intergenerational criminal behaviour, so neither they, nor their parents/caregivers, made themselves available for the final questionnaires and interviews.



What we heard

Listening to Pasifika young people in youth justice and their aiga/families was at the heart of this research. This section presents data from the interviews with the young people and their parents/caregivers around the three research aims: 1) to explore mental health amongst this group; 2) to examine culture, family and spirituality in association with mental health; and 3) to hear about the young people's reflections on their offending behaviour and experiences within the youth justice system. Many quotes from the transcribed talanoaga are included but anonymised to maintain confidentiality. A summary of findings concludes this section.



1. Examine mental health problems and substance use amongst Pasifika youth with offending behaviour

We focused on exploring mental health in the talanoaga with young people and their parents. Before we talked about mental health, it was important to make sure we had the same understanding of what the term refers to. Substance use details were explored in the previous section of this report; in the interviews, alcohol use, in particular, was sometimes discussed.

What is mental health?

‘Mental health’ had a range of meanings for Pasifika youth and their families unrelated to standard ‘medical’ meanings. There was either no understanding of ‘mental health’ as related to western/ medical ideas of emotional wellbeing or diagnoses of mental illnesses, or it varied primarily in relation to emotions and economic stressors. There was clearly a cultural context to how mental health was viewed. Table 3 presents comments from participants.

Table 3. Discussions of mental health: Comments from young people and parents/caregivers

| Little or no understanding of ‘mental health’ | |
|--|---|
| YOUNG PEOPLE: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What’s mental health?</i> • <i>I really don’t know.</i> • <i>Nah [I don’t know], anything that can help us ... like stop our addictions.</i> |
| PARENTS/ CAREGIVERS: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>We don’t know what mental health is in our culture.</i> • <i>Ou te le iloa. I don’t know.</i> • <i>I don’t even know ... it’s a sickness, but then I thought about it, it’s not understanding the system [that] can really cause them sickness.</i> |
| Varied understanding of mental health (in relation to emotions, economic stress) | |
| YOUNG PEOPLE: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It’s your mind, aye? How people think. Because everyone thinks differently and some people can cope with situations and some they can cope in like good, they can handle it and some can’t handle it ... Some stay quiet, some start cutting themselves.</i> • <i>It’s hard to speak to other people but for me depression was just a normal thing, depression, anger, those were the main ones, those were just an everyday thing, those were normal. So when white people see that, it’s like just looking down on us even more.</i> • <i>If you were the kid inside, you wouldn’t notice, but others outside would.</i> |
| PARENTS/ CAREGIVERS: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It’s something that we keep inside or hiding, yeah, we never share.</i> • <i>O lo’u malamalama i ai o le ta’u o tagata ua leaga ulu a? My understanding is, people say they are crazy? Ia pau a ga aua a faasamoa e tatou o tagata ua leaga le mafafau, ua leai se faamoemoe foi a gale, ua no hope. Well, in the Samoan culture, it’s people with minds that are bad, there is no hope [for them].</i> • <i>Fa’afetauli o le olaga nei....Ua leai fo’i se tupe, ua le lava le fa’asoa. Stresses of life ... there is no money, we cannot budget.</i> |
| Cultural understanding of mental health | |
| CULTURAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF MENTAL HEALTH WERE DISCUSSED PARTICULARLY BY PARENTS/ CAREGIVERS: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Possession by ghost spirits.</i> • <i>Tongan people never believe in mental health. They believe in voodoo.</i> • <i>Kusa ua avaku le upu palagi lea i Samoa ua faaoga sese a? Kusa o lea ua faaoga sese o le mental a ia e faamakala ai le Palagi le ma’i o le mafaufau pei ua fai ma mea pei e ula ai. The English word ‘mental health’ has been taken to Samoa and used incorrectly. Palagi has used the word ‘mental’ to describe an illness of the mind and we’ve made fun of it.</i> |

What are the factors that influence mental health?

We asked about factors that influenced mental health by drawing on dimensions of the Fonofale model. We began by asking participants whether there was any relationship between culture and mental health, family and mental health, spirituality and mental health. If there was a relationship, we asked what related to what. It was not long before a pattern emerged regarding mental health and financial stressors. **Economic hardship featured as a key factor that influenced mental health.** Participants comments are in Table 4.

Table 4. Factors that influence mental health: Comments from young people and parents/caregivers

| | |
|---|---|
| Cultural identity and connection | |
| YOUNG PEOPLE: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture and mental health is important cos the world is racist. • [The pressure to know and understand your culture] starts young [learning to be Samoan] and there's a lot of pressure as a young kid, and if you aren't, if you stray away from that path, you're judged, you're picked on or treated differently. |
| PARENTS/ CAREGIVERS: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If Samoan connection is good, then good mental health. • When you think about being a Samoan in a western country, it can affect mental health, my boys don't fit in education, they don't fit in a box. |
| Family | |
| YOUNG PEOPLE: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some people are probably just mental because of their family, what they've been through and stuff. |
| PARENTS/ CAREGIVERS: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happy home, happy life, happy child. • Like our family went downhill. Like we were doing good until we found out she [grandmother] passed away and it slowly went from the oldest all the way down. |
| Spirituality | |
| YOUNG PEOPLE: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can go to church and listen to deal with your problems. Forget about your problems. • There is always a time when you need God in life, for example if you're struggling or something, all you gotta do is pray. |
| PARENTS/ CAREGIVERS: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It [church, prayer] might give you a little bit of ease sometimes. • When you lack that faith and you allow things to become a stumbling block then that's when the mental state is scattered but [staying committed to your faith makes] a heck of a difference. |
| Economic stress | |
| YOUNG PEOPLE: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I struggle seeing mum struggle with money. • Mum works two jobs just to provide for the family. • I wanted to do street work [using a bike to transport packages] to get cash for nana. • The world runs on money, and Māori and PI don't have money. • ... before going in Court we were on the streets, me, two of my older brothers ... and just some friends. That's why we done all this stuff [stealing] ... surviving... it was just mainly money, things that we could like sell for money ... some would go on food. Yeah. |
| PARENTS/ CAREGIVERS: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If I didn't get the job we would, probably, would have been worse off and it would have been so stressful that it would have shown on the kids because our house is a very emotional house, the kids feed off us. • I work from Monday to Saturday, from 7am–11pm. I do double shift but when this [offending] happened, I cut down my hours, I think my kids need me, not the money. • I'm not a good mother, I can't feed my children because if I use the money to pay my bill, how am I going to feed my children? Sometimes we do go without food, sometimes I find food like I used to do it this way just to ease my mental thinking. I used to pay the bills in two weeks and have no food; and the next two weeks I fill up the cupboards and don't pay the bills. |

2. Examine culture, family and spirituality and its association with mental health

Drawing on the dimensions of the Fonofale model, we discussed whether culture, family and spirituality were relevant to mental health. This was important to explore as all of these areas contribute to the holistic worldview through which Pasifika people generally understand health.

Culture

Ulu kite fatu e malu ei koe. Shelter in the rock of your safety. It is important to protect one's culture as the foundation of identity. (Tuvalu)

Culture was a factor that all of the young people could relate to as they talked about being Samoan, Tongan etc. However, their understanding of how that was linked to mental health was unclear as often it was tricky for them to connect between the pride in their culture and the nature of their offending behaviour. Parents saw the value of connecting with their culture and, particularly for their children of mixed ethnicity, holding on to all their identities (see Table 5).

Table 5. Culture and mental health: Comments from young people and parents/caregivers

| Culture | |
|----------------------|---|
| YOUNG PEOPLE: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I forgot that, you know, I let my ego get the best of me. I let myself get greedy and, yeah, I think I just forgot about our Samoan way ... and started living the Palagi way.</i> |
| PARENTS/ CAREGIVERS: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It's mentally healthy for us to belong to something that is rich in culture. We have our own dialect or language and there is beauty in the Samoan customs. I know it has an impact on the way I react to certain things.</i> • <i>O le aiga e leai se matai, o se aiga o tamaiti. A family with no Chief, it's a family of children.</i> • <i>He took the Māori haka, and he did the Siva Tau in Tonga ... Proud of NZ, proud of Tonga.</i> |

Family

O uo mo aso uma, a o le uso mo aso vale. A friend is available every day, though a sibling (or family) is there for times of distress^b. (Samoan)

b. This Samoan saying is often seen as an adaptation of the Bible verse Proverbs 17:17 A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity (New International Version). It is not uncommon for Samoan sayings to be grounded in Biblical verses.

The role of aiga/family was generally seen as positive for young people and their parents/caregivers. Young people saw their aiga as a motivating factor to desist from further offending; however, this was tricky given some of their exposure to family violence, parental criminality and family discord. Parents saw their own value as parents and the need for them to step up and be there for their children. See comments in Table 6.

Table 6. Family and mental health: Comments from young people and parents/caregivers

| Can family improve mental health? | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| YOUNG PEOPLE: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• I just wanted something better for me and my family ... make them proud as my parents because they didn't go to work for nothing, they work for a reason.</i> |
| PARENTS/ CAREGIVERS: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• In order for my son to be back to normal, as a normal child, he needs to hear it from me, my husband, his sisters, his brother. He needs to know that we are all there for him...I recruited my own family [to help him].</i> <i>• If it's good in the home and you can prepare your child well for what is out there ... I mean sometimes you can prepare them and they're still going to fall outside, you know, you can't protect them from that and that's life; but if you tell them ... just be there for them when that does happen that's all they need, they just need to know they're loved, that there's someone that cares for them and you can get past this.</i> |

Spirituality

‘Oua lau e kafo kae lau e lava. Stay positive and count your blessings. (Tongan)

When spirituality was explored, church and prayer seemed to coincide in their responses. Half of the young people involved in the study were currently attending church at the time of their youth justice matters being dealt with. Prayer was positive for some. For both young people and parents/caregivers, church could be an enabler of mental wellbeing, or a barrier to it (in terms of judgement about justice system involvement, for example), or a mix (see Table 7).

Table 7. Spirituality and mental health: Comments from young people and parents/caregivers

Church is an enabler

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| YOUNG PEOPLE: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's [church] a place where people go ... like the one we went to, it was a Christian church so people were going there to get changes, to change their lives and it worked for them. Some were like smokers, drugs ... like they wouldn't change straight away, it would take time, but they would keep on going and then after a while they just stop everything, just keep going church. <p>Prayer was seen as powerful and positive for some young people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes I pray, I hope for a better life. • The only thing that helps me is saying a prayer. |
| PARENTS/ CAREGIVERS: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The church is very important to us, our family, it's a part of us, we go every Sunday. • The church itself is good. But I think it's how we run the church, how we get ourselves involved and what we say, you know, the input of your words, you know? And the different backgrounds, can, you know. [This mother chose to keep her son's offending away from the church] ... and that's another reason we don't want people to judge our parenting. |

Church is a barrier

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| YOUNG PEOPLE: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'll just go to church, wait until church finish and eat to'ona'i [church lunch] ... I mainly fall asleep, it's boring. • In that moment of church, [you] feel good, don't want to do bad. But when the pese [singing] ends, you're like, 'I'll just have a smoke' [cannabis]. • There's a lot of good and bad [about going to church]. Some people actually need religion to keep them stable sometimes. |
| PARENTS/ CAREGIVERS: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People gossiped and talked about the loss of my husband. I lost a lot of weight so church people talked behind [my] back ... accused [me] of having an affair. • Giving to church, but church doesn't help. • ... like when I was hard out into church, I was stressed. You've got God and church there and all the praying and all that but at the same time that mental issues is still there. |

3. Understand the experiences of Pasifika youth and its relevance to offending behaviour

In the beginning of the research, the young people self-reported any offending^c since Court or in the past six months following the behaviour they had been charged with. One-third had committed a property offence, and almost 50% (11) had committed a violent offence. Overall, just over half of the young people in the study (12) had reported at least one property or violent offence, that were unlikely to be known to Police. Comparing the self-reported measures of emotional and behavioural problems (in the CBCL) with their rates of self-reported offending, there were moderate to strong positive associations between self-reported emotional and behavioural problems with rates of any offending. Noticeably, the strongest association was with violent and property offending. When the young people were interviewed, it was possible to unpack these associations by exploring their views on their offending behaviour and why they offended. The quotes in this section are all from young people.

Reflections on their offending behaviour

They knew their offending behaviour was **wrong** and expressed remorse, regret and feelings of shame about their behaviour.

“ I stopped stealing because I always used to steal ... when you think of it, it's a hood rat thing.

It was a stupid thing what I had done.

The first time I went into Court, I had no idea what I was doing. I was just lost and like it made me regret what I did.

Mates in the community ask me, 'Hey, I thought you were in jail...' I don't like it... it's shaming myself.

I held them up...[armed robbery]. [Interviewer:] How did you feel about that? Stupid, aye.

Why did I do it?

Money appeared to be a key driver for offending behaviour. However, this appeared mainly due to survival and seeking money for basic needs such as food. This highlights the importance of economic wellbeing as a crucial factor when responding to offending behaviour of young people. However, for some, as they got more skilled at offending, the desire for money became a need for material wealth and status.

“ We were just hungry ... [taking things] just to get money.

Before going in Court, we were on the streets ... that's why we done all this stuff – surviving ... [It] was mainly just money [or] things that we could sell for money. Some would go for food.

Mostly, they do that stuff because like they are [financially] struggling. [Young person was talking about young people as 'they']

c. This was captured in the custom-made questionnaire. Young people were asked to either report whether they had committed any further offences since their appearance in Court or six months following their index offence (for those who did not appear in Court). These offences were unlikely to be known by Police.

Young people also reflected, in hindsight, on their offending behaviour. They often highlighted **thoughts of not thinking about the consequences of their action**. Following their offending behaviour, they were able to recognise what they needed to do better, including offering advice to other young people.

“ Take time to think about what you want to do before you do it, cos you might want to do it but you don’t know it’s going to be bad.

I always say think of your future and where you are going to end up in ... your future starts here, like if you want to prepare yourself for the future, start now.

Once you start heading down that road, it’s just going to get harder and harder, it’s not going to get easy, you know, because one lie you try and cover up with a lie and that lie is going to add up to more and more lies and before you know, you’re living a life of lying.

As is to be expected amongst young people, the need to **seek thrills (sensation-seeking)**, participate in risk-taking behaviour and respond to boredom were common reasons given as to why their offending began.

“ At the time it was cool ... I drove to Hamilton just for the fun of it.

I used to sit at home and that would just make me go do something bad.

They [young person referring to the youth offending population] have nothing to do.

Status was also identified as a reason for offending behaviour—to gain credibility amongst peers. However, this conflicted with cultural values and beliefs.

“ All about credibility.

People show off.

Our people, like we have so much fa’aaloalo for people ... respect others, you know, show kindness to others, you know, help each other ... I forgot that, you know. I let my ego get the best of me. I let myself get greedy and, yeah, I think I just forgot about our Samoan way.

The use of **alcohol** while offending was noted by the young people. A majority of young people in the study reported that they drank alcohol and that they were under the influence of alcohol at the time of their offending behaviour.

“ We were drunk.

It was the alcohol.

I was drunk.

When I get drunk, I fight.

What was the youth justice system like?

As the talanoaga continued with the young person throughout the phases of the study, their experiences of the youth justice system were naturally highlighted in their talk. We draw on the concept of the Va to highlight these experiences.

POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

Despite being in a youth justice system, there were some experiences that were positive for these young people. Some youth justice facilities were far better resourced than the homes they came from, which contextualises the poverty many faced:

“ [Secure residential facility] doesn't feel like you're locked up ... [it's like] a little holiday. Got a couch, TV, heaps of privileges.

Young people referred to certain people that they met along the way. These individuals provided them with access to support, someone to talk to, and opportunities for better life outcomes, such as employment and driver's licencing. However, the support was not necessarily going to be sustained for as long as they might need it.

“ It was just like when they helped out, I was, like, man, this is mean ... [they helped with] relationship issues, she was helping me do my licence and my social worker was going to help me get back into the course.

[The best help?] ... Just to talk to the social worker, that's what is helping me now, I talk to my social worker.

[Offending] is not worth it but, in a way, they did help me pretty much a lot. The system got me my first job, yeah, this was when I was in a boy's home in [that town]; they helped me get my job; they got me my learner's licence ... I did a lot while I've been in the system.

What worked well is there's people there to support me ... What could be improved? If they were to stay longer.

Whilst having access to support was a positive experience, the relationships and care that can be seen within the context of tauisi le Va and teu le Va were identified as key features that sustained a young person's engagement with the system. However, it was clear from the talanoaga that the quality of relationships formed between young people and professionals in the system were not consistent.

“ Most supportive – having people check in ... pop by when they can.

[The lay advocate] been working with us for years and she understand what we're going through, like she knows a lot about us. But [the social worker] she doesn't really know much about us, and like she wants us to re-explain ourselves.

Those that really want to help come, but not many of them ... those that always turn up ... [Caring is] just turn up.

They show you love and they show you love and they support you all the way and, you know, come and see you like now and then; but [other] people they just, you know, come just for Court purposes.

She's white but she's not palagi [that is, previous experiences with white/palagi people have not been positive] ... she's helpful.

Everyone helped me ... always checking in, giving me programmes ... dropping me off every morning to Court and school.

By the end of their time in the youth justice system, some young people were able to reflect on their time as a learning experience.

“ Learning curve.

It's good to go to Court, learn from my mistakes. It's bad to go to Court every time.

You're young, you don't know what you're doing and going through ... I just looked at it as just a life lesson. It's a good experience ... taught me ... if I was going to go down that path, I could do other things to prevent that from happening.

Had to go through this at age 16 years before having to [become] an adult ...Wake-up call.

NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES

A number of negative experiences were highlighted in relation to the systemic issues the young people faced within the youth justice system, and the relationships they had with various youth justice system professionals. These instances highlighted examples of *solle Va*. The *Va* had been breached between the young person and the system, between the young person and the professionals supposed to support them, and by their experiences of not having a voice. Some of the young people found the people that were working to support them were actually creating barriers to their ability to move forward from their offending behaviour.

“ Nothing has worked well ... instead of like giving us another shovel, like helping us dig a hole, maybe they could help us, you know? ... We are already starting to dig that hole and then they put in their information [i.e., assessments, their opinions about the offending, the family etc] and they are basically helping us to dig that hole and it gets deeper and deeper.

The young people highlighted a mismatch and **disconnection from programmes** and meetings, which often led to frustration and boredom throughout the process. There were also elements of disconnection within the system, making it hard to understand what was going on.

“ It just got annoying ... it was like you have to [go to] heaps of meetings ... They just kept asking the same questions ... I was like, 'What are these types of questions?'

[The mentoring programme is] pretty gay [useless] ... not so fun ... it's not something you'd want to experience. You don't have much freedom ... it's boring ... and therefore you breach ... [The programme] was good at the start and then it goes ... ummm. It did get boring ... not much stuff to do.

The programmes just don't work well ... too much fights. I went to [mentoring programme] and didn't last like one week ... I didn't end up going the next day because it was boring.

Communication was a barrier for many of the young people about the legal and justice processes. One mentioned their lawyer was helpful in 'breaking it down'.

“ It was hard to understand – all their big words ... [worried to] say the wrong answer and end up in jail.

Don't understand, [they] use high quality words ... don't understand what [that organisation] says about you and you agree but you don't understand it.

I don't understand what's going on [in Court] ... but my lawyer breaks it down.

Another element of communication was where the young person talked about **not having a voice in the process**. This led to feelings of frustration and recognition that people who were meant to be supporting them, actually were not.

“ [It's] frustrating ... at Court, the weird [thing] for me was like they didn't let me speak on like what I had to say or like how I was feeling about it ... so I didn't really get a decision.

Don't judge a book by its cover ... if the [Judge] could come and spend one whole day with you; one whole day with you before giving your sentence and find out who you really are and actually one-on-one with you. And see if he could actually make a change because by him giving that, you know, it's critical of how he judges because that sets up the young person [like me] for life.

Systemic issues relating to **time, lack of organisation and resourcing, and poor-quality relationships** were also highlighted by some of the young people. These particularly centred around the family group conferences (FGCs) that are mandatory for a young person who has offended, with goals and a plan of action made with their family members, support people, and various professionals (e.g., social workers, lay advocate, psychologist, mentors). Follow-up FGCs are supposed to be arranged in a timely manner to ensure actions are being carried out, adequate resources being applied and so on. These young people experienced this not being the case.

“ Everything takes too long ... to wait, for stuff to be done, to be remanded takes ages. Takes a whole month between each FGC ... [get] bored ... take off.

I got a [youth worker] and [social worker] at FGC, they're told what to do but then they don't actually do it. Then when [next] FGC meeting, they blame it on me but it's the people I need help from ... They're just there to tick boxes and get paid ... [they] don't keep their word.

The social workers are all good, there's just never enough of them ... Sometimes one social worker has two boys to deal with at the same time ... one would be like having a Court case and another one would like need to get an FGC but they're both with the one social worker; and she can't be at the Court case because she has to be at the FGC; or the social worker can't be at the FGC because she has to be at the Court case.

Young people in the study also highlighted the western world dominance within the justice system that also included differences amongst Palagi (Pākehā) and Pasifika.

“ This is a white system ... nothing [worked well].

The [Judge], mostly, they are mostly going to be Palagi and they are going to be judging, they are going to be using their ways and they wouldn't like include like the Pacific side, they will say, 'Oh yeah, we will do like a Pacific report', and stuff like that but it's just for show, they don't really use it. It doesn't really matter to them but it does for me, I like to stand in front of my own people, sort of thing ... Because to me they're actually pretty fair how they do it in the Pacific Court. The difference is that when the islander's given second chances, it's actual second chance; but when the Palagis gets it out it's not a second chance, it's basically burying you in the ground and you're useless for the future.

Overall, it was noticeable how relationships between young people and those who worked with them was a significant feature in their ability to have positive or negative experiences, and thereby engage in the process to seek positive outcomes (or not). The role of relationships, *teu le Va*, *tausi le Va*, remains a key feature for authentic and positive engagement and uptake by young people in the youth justice system. For a young person to feel positive about their experience in court, and make efforts to do better, depends on the relationship they have with key professionals intended to support them throughout their journey.

What changed?

There were a number of young people who reportedly refrained from any further offending during the time of the research. As a result, it was important to understand what changed in their lives that contributed to this change in behaviour.

A change in motivation and mindset was identified by young people as a means to change their offending behaviour. Some expressed a desire to reciprocate and make family members proud, whilst others talked about needing to change their lives, particularly if there was recognition of possible consequences of their behaviour.

“ If I was doing it when older, you'd be doing time ... now I know what would happen ... I should get my life straight.

Never breached bail, didn't want consequences ... Ever since that day happened, I just thought positively, straightforward, and wanted to get it done so I would never see those four walls again ... What made me feel positive was because I just wanted something better for me and my family, mum and dad, just to make them proud, that was the promise I made to them – to finish school. Make them proud, as my parents, because they didn't work for nothing, they work for a reason.

I think that's what helped me stay out of trouble, for a little while, was just reconnecting with my roots ... I've had enough of taking and hurting people, it's just time for me just to start giving back.

The value of family was seen to be a key feature in the young people changing their behaviour, including what they were modelling to siblings (or how to better care for them) and also the impact of having children of their own.

“ Looking at mum stress out....[and worried about young siblings to follow in his footsteps].

My motivation was my siblings. Even like now, I hate seeing them how we lived ... We're living on a budget and I just want the best for them because that's all I wanted as a kid, the best for me. I still get lollies and a gift for them when I can, just to put a smile on their face, that's all I wanted as a kid to like, you know, I wanted all these lollies and try new things. I'm sure they would want the same things as a kid.

You've just got to think about your family and what type of person you want to be.

Having my own kids, how am I going to look after them?

Five out of the 12 young people in the study found employment and were currently raising children of their own. According to parent/caregiver comments, it was the life-changing event of their young person having their own children that had deterred them from any further offending or antisocial behaviour. The sustainability of this is unknown.

Having **access to programmes and resources** also provided opportunities for the young person to deter from any further offending.

“ It's probably the course that's helped me to change ... [Education course] helped with this change.

Every single support that they gave me, like mentoring, [a programme], church and family. *Could you have done with just one of those programmes or do you think all of those needed to work together?* I recommend that all of them.

They should give the youth like work experience ... it's better because a job really does distract a youth from like doing crimes because they're getting money but they don't have to do crime to get the money.

Advice: STAY IN SCHOOL

Upon conclusion of each talanoaga with the young person, they were asked whether there was any advice they would pass on to a younger version of themselves or someone thinking of doing crime. A unanimous response from the young people was to **stay in school**.

Once I left school that's when I started getting into trouble ... [School] kicking us out – that just puts us down, that we feel like nobody wants us and that's when they put us in that environment. I felt like I belonged with that group because they all got kicked out and we all felt unwanted. So for me, schools should never kick a kid out of school just because they're misbehaving.

Go to school.

Stay in school.

Go find a course.

I would start going to school ... I actually do really miss school a lot.

When asked what would help them stay, seeing as they had already withdrawn from school, they referred to the support of the system to maintain their engagement and attendance in school, to 'never kick a kid out of school just because they're misbehaving'.

Help kids get them what they want, e.g. if there's a favourite sport, help them into that sport.

They're getting paid to come to school, educate us, help us.

We should all get together, share the love. We all have our little groups that share love ... Imagine if we got together as one big group and shared that love.

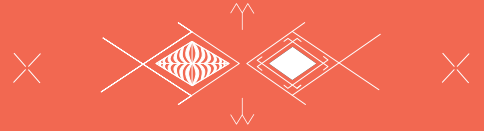


Summary of findings

- ◆ 'Mental health' remains relatively unknown as a concept or it is strongly linked to economic stress and emotional problems that cannot be explained. It is a western concept being placed in a Pasifika worldview that is generally misunderstood.
- ◆ Behavioural and emotional problems were not reported to be a major concern by parents/ caregivers or the young people in the CBCL questionnaire; however, parents/caregivers were still concerned about their child's wellbeing. Rule-breaking behaviour was a strong feature (it did not reach 'statistical significance' in the survey, but was important in the experiences of these families). Over time, there was an overall reduction in the behavioural and emotional problems reported by parents and young people, and rule-breaking behaviour decreased the most.
- ◆ A large number of the young people engaged in substance use, specifically alcohol, with reports of binge drinking behaviour and drinking to get drunk, plus offending that occurred while drunk.
- ◆ Economic stress was experienced as a significant contributor to poor mental health as well as a primary reason for offending behaviour.
- ◆ Access to cultural resources, improved family satisfaction (including relationships) and connection to spirituality (e.g., church) appeared to mitigate and lessen emotional and behavioural problems amongst Pasifika youth with offending behaviour.

Overall, therefore, we need to hold in mind these four key points:

1. Positive cultural identity and connectedness were seen as *defining* positive mental health.
2. Positive wellbeing of family *defined* positive mental health of young people.
3. Faith and spirituality were seen as *potentially improving* mental health.
4. 'Mental health' needs to be seen as 'health'—not as a part of health. Health is holistic and encompasses *all* dimensions of the Fonofale model that must also include economic and social wealth.

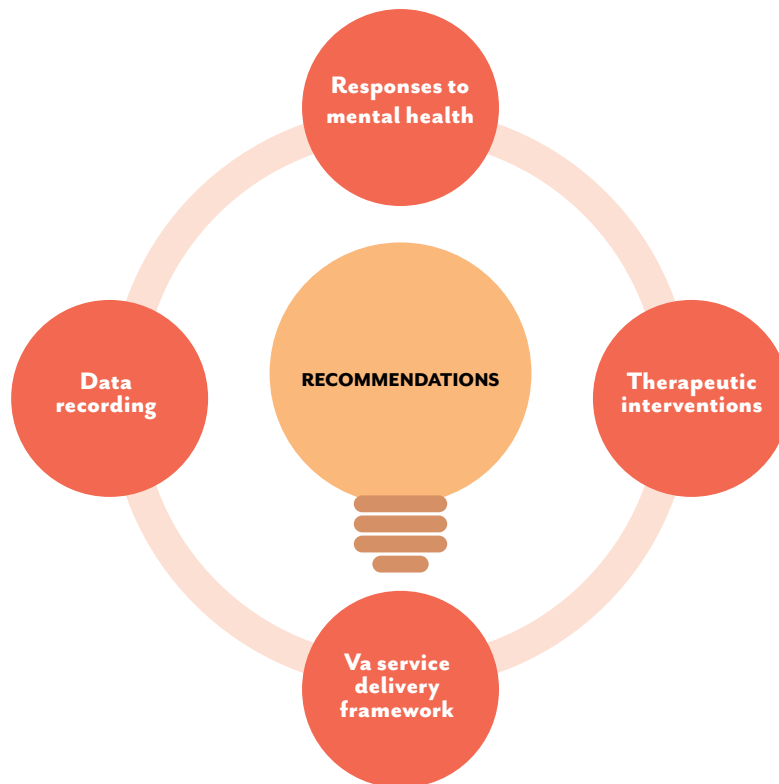


What do we do about it?

This section presents recommendations for some steps to take to 1) improve mental health information that is available to Pasifika; 2) develop therapeutic interventions that appropriately include aiga and peers, and address cultural, spiritual and economic wellbeing; 3) embed service delivery that is grounded within the Va; and 4) improve data recording of ethnicity that gives access to appropriate support. The conclusions call for better understanding of mental health as health within a holistic Pasifika worldview that informs systems, agencies and relationships, governed by the Va.



Recommendations



RECOMMENDATION 1: Responses to mental health

Roll out a national training programme on Pasifika health (inclusive of mental health) to churches and Aoga Amata.

Understanding mental health remains limited for young people and their aiga/families in the youth justice system. Mental health needs to be seen as health. It is holistic and encompasses all dimensions of the Fonofale model. Based on the findings of this study, health is positive cultural identity, family stability, stable economic and social wealth, and positive faith and spirituality. All these factors mitigate the risk of offending behaviour, and reduce emotional and behavioural problems amongst Pasifika youth in Aotearoa NZ.

Anecdotally, there are a number of 'mental health' programmes and interventions carried out and developed within Pasifika churches. We need to understand the scope of these and take a collective approach to ensuring a unified understanding of mental health can be undertaken.

The training needs to be delivered by church leaders and teachers, with direct support from mental health clinicians. Aoga Amata are Pacific-based early childhood and preschool centres in Aotearoa NZ and could also be an information delivery site for parents. The discussion of whether the word 'mental' is relevant amongst Pasifika communities needs further exploration, as this study suggests that it is a barrier to getting appropriate support.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Therapeutic interventions

Develop a Pasifika intervention programme that is aiga-based to address cultural resources and relationships, and peer-based to address alcohol and substance use, emotional and behavioural problems, cultural identity and spirituality. Economic and financial wellbeing must also be explored among family and peers.

The findings of this study highlight the need for aiga-based interventions as fundamental when working with Pasifika youth in youth justice. Furthermore, peer-based interventions should also be included when working with Pasifika youth in youth justice, replacing individual therapy with group-based therapy to respond to areas such as alcohol use, rule-breaking and aggressive behaviour. Alcohol use needs to be a priority alongside psychoeducation regarding binge drinking behaviour. Due to the importance of economic and social health in this study, therapeutic interventions need to include a pathway to improving economic and financial wellbeing of young people and families.

Poverty and financial struggles continued to be a key contributing factor amongst the limited understanding of this group with regards to poor mental health. This was also seen in the young person's explanation of why they offended. Money was a driver for crime that was primarily for meeting basic needs relating to food and family necessity. The impact of COVID-19, contrary to most of Aotearoa NZ at that time, was described as a 'blessing' by the parents involved in this study because of the provision of food and resources. This highlighted the need for economic growth and support amongst these families, despite the majority having fulltime employment. Resources to support economic wellbeing in families should inform any intervention plan that involves a young person in the justice system.

However, it is important to understand that the interventions of alcohol counselling, aiga-based interventions and peer-based interventions, and input to enhance economic and financial wellbeing cannot be separated from one another, nor should they be mutually exclusive. At the same time, the involvement of family, culture and spirituality can also be tricky and needs to be explored based on the context of each young person and their family. It is important to be aware that spirituality, family and culture are both protective and tricky for youth. This will need to be strongly reviewed in the development of a youth justice treatment plan.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Va service delivery

Develop a Pasifika service delivery framework across the justice sector that is grounded within the Va.

Va needs to be embedded across all layers of relationships with the Pasifika young person and their aiga/family, across professionals and across the community. All personnel involved in any aspects of service delivery will need training in the implementation of the Va in a culturally safe manner. The Va assumes respect in all interactions, regardless of the parties involved. The relationship is prioritised over anything else, and it is their identity that governs the relationships. All parties need to agree to build (teu le Va) key relationships, nurture and maintain (tausi le Va) these relationships by respecting their Va with one another and with the young person and their parent/caregiver. It is important to recognise and acknowledge that, if the relationship provided by those delivering the comprehensive interventions in Recommendation 2 is sub-standard, the outcome is likely to be compromised. This leads to soli le Va. When there is soli le Va, a restorative and healing process is required to rebuild and re-nurture the Va in a culturally safe manner.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Improve data recording

Record ethnicity data accurately, including mixed identities.

Ethnicity coding continues to remain an issue in capturing accurate data about Pasifika peoples, especially in Palagi systems. Whilst Pasifika peoples may have some fundamental similarities, there are key features that differentiate between them (i.e., Tongan, Samoan, NZ-born, island-born etc) and this needs to be acknowledged.

Young people and their parents/caregivers also talked about the challenges of dual ethnicities (e.g., both Pasifika and Māori), and not quite fitting in a box. It may be that time on the marae, as well as at the Tongan or Samoan youth group, may help a particular young person move away from offending, and ensure their 'family' of support is broadly defined.

The self-reported identity of the Pasifika young people we spoke to was generally high. Furthermore, young people who rated their wellbeing, spirituality and cultural identities as high were less likely to be reported as having high levels of behavioural problems. Most spoke fondly of their ethnicities and this needs to inform their intervention plans.

The identity of Pasifika youth can be a strong and positive feature in mitigating some of the risks they face. It is important that work continues to implement ways to include their diverse ethnicities in data recording. Having data as accurate as possible as to the real ethnicities of Pasifika people in Aotearoa NZ will enable a targeted response to their needs and, most importantly, a young person is not asked to choose only one of their ethnicities.

CONCLUSION:

Understanding mental health as health highlights the holistic worldview of Pasifika people that must be incorporated in the way in which systems, agencies and people work. Responding to emotional and behavioural problems, improving familial and peer relationships, reducing substance abuse, increasing cultural connection and resources alongside community engagement (e.g., church, sport, music/arts etc) all need to work together. Furthermore, this will be more effective when the values that underpin Pasifika communities and governed by the Va are embedded across this work. This is the way to engage authentically with Pasifika peoples as *teu le Va* and *tausi le Va*, in order to achieve genuine and positive outcomes.

At the same time, it is important to remember that culture, family and spirituality (e.g., church) can also be quite tricky for our young people and therefore need to be explored, depending on the context of the young person and their family. The findings of this study have shown that they can be an enabler as well as a barrier for positive outcomes, and must also be understood in the context of *solu le Va*.

Seeking solutions for our Pasifika youth and their families in the justice system is an ongoing journey that requires open and agile minds to ensure outcomes are sustainable. These are complex and challenging matters for all involved, and therefore the development of complex, innovative and ground-breaking solutions will be important.

APPENDIX

Pacific Identity and Wellbeing Scale-Revised (PIWBS-R)

This scale was developed by Manuela and Sibley and revised in 2015.²⁴ The factors it covers are shown in the table below, ranging from the young person's satisfaction with their family relationships (PFW), to their sense of Pacific belonging (PCB), the extent to which religion is entwined with their identity (RCE), through to their own sense of being able to act resourcefully in a Pacific cultural context (that is, a sense of 'cultural efficacy'- CE).

| FACTOR | CONSTRUCT DEFINITION |
|--|--|
| Perceived Familial Wellbeing (PFW) | Perceived satisfaction with one's family. Indicated by satisfaction with familial relationships, respect, happiness, and security. |
| Perceived Societal Wellbeing (PSW) | Perceived satisfaction with NZ society. Indicated by satisfaction with support from government, local communities, and one's position in NZ society. |
| Group Membership Evaluation (GME) | Subjective evaluations of one's perceived membership in the Pacific group. Indicated by positive affect derived from group membership. |
| Pacific Connectedness & Belonging (PCB) | A sense of belonging and connections with Pacific others and the Pacific group at a general level. |
| Religious Centrality & Embeddedness (RCE) | The extent to which an individual feels that religion is intertwined with one's Pacific culture and identity. |
| Cultural Efficacy (CE) | The extent to which an individual feels they have the personal and cultural resources to act within a Pacific cultural or social context. |

NOTE: Table from Manuela and Sibley,²⁴ p. 62.

Items are rated using a 7-point rating scale. For example, participants rated their family and societal relationships from **Completely dissatisfied** to **Completely satisfied** on items like this:

- The respect you give for your parents (PFW)
- The respect you receive from your family (PFW)
- Your relationship with New Zealand society (PSW)

Participants indicated how much they agreed with statements like these, from **Strongly disagree** to **Strongly agree**:

- I am proud to be a Pacific Islander. (GME)
- I feel at home around other Islanders, even if they are not from my island. (PCB)
- Going to church is part of my culture and religion. (RCE)
- I find it difficult to express my Pacific culture. (CE)

Each statement was scored by the young person, after going through the statement together to ensure they understood.

REFERENCES

1. Ioane J, Lambie I, Percival T. A comparison of Pacific, Māori, and European violent youth offenders in New Zealand. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 2016; **60**(6): 657-74.
2. Manuela S, Anae M. Pacific youth, acculturation and identity: The relationship between ethnic identity and well-being - new directions for research. *Pacific Dynamics* 2017; **1**(1):129-147.
3. Kwan PP, Soniega-Sherwood J, Esmundo S, Watts J, Pike J, Sabado-Liwag M, Palmer PH. Access and utilization of mental health services among Pacific Islanders. *Asian American Journal of Psychology* 2020; **11**(2): 69.
4. Crengle S, Robinson E, Ameratunga S, Clark T, Raphael D. Ethnic discrimination prevalence and associations with health outcomes: data from a nationally representative cross-sectional survey of secondary school students in New Zealand. *BMC Public Health* 2012; **12**: 1-11.
5. Walker GH, Boden JM, Fergusson DM, Horwood LJ. Examining the associations between offending trajectories in adolescence/young adulthood and subsequent mental health disorders. *Journal of Criminal Justice* 2019; **62**: 94-100.
6. Baidawi S, Papalia N, Featherston R. Gender differences in the maltreatment-youth offending relationship: a scoping review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* 2023; **24**(2): 1140-56.
7. McAra L, McVie S. Youth crime and justice: Key messages from the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime. *Criminology & Criminal Justice* 2010; **10**(2): 179-209.
8. Underwood LA, Washington A. Mental illness and juvenile offenders. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 2016; **13**(2): 228.
9. Estévez E, Emler NP. Assessing the links among adolescent and youth offending, antisocial behaviour, victimization, drug use, and gender. *International Journal of Clinical and Health Psychology* 2011; **11**(2): 269-89.
10. Seddig D. Peer group association, the acceptance of norms and violent behaviour: A longitudinal analysis of reciprocal effects. *European Journal of Criminology* 2014; **11**(3): 319-39.
11. Van de Weijer SG, Bijleveld CC, Blokland AA. The intergenerational transmission of violent offending. *Journal of Family Violence* 2014; **29**: 109-18.
12. MacRae L, Krisa M, Bertrand LD, Paetsch JJ, Ringuist L. Pathways and transitions of persistent youth offenders in Alberta: Alberta Safe Communities Innovation Fund, 2014.
13. Ravulo J. Pacific youth offending within an Australian context. *Youth Justice* 2016; **16**(1): 34-48.
14. Ioane J, Lambie I. Pacific youth and violent offending in Aotearoa New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology* 2016; **45**(3).
15. Ioane J, Tudor K. Family-centered therapy: Implications of Pacific spirituality for person-centered theory and practice. *Person-Centered & Experiential Psychotherapies* 2022: 1-19.
16. Fairbairn-Dunlop TP. "He's Won, but He's Lost It" Applying a Samoa gender lens to education outcomes. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples* 2010; **6**(2): 143-54.
17. Puluotu-Endemann FK. *Fonofale model*. Workshop on Pacific health promotion models: A partnership between the Health Promotion Forum of New Zealand & Pasifika@ MasseyWellington Campus, Massey University, New Zealand. Retrieved from <http://www.hauora.co.nz/~hpforum/resources/Fonofalemodel.pdf>; 2009.
18. Thaman KH. Looking towards the source: A consideration of (cultural) context in teacher education. *Access: Contemporary Issues in Education* 1992; **11**(2): 88-93.
19. Fua SJ. *Kakala research framework: A garland in celebration of a decade of rethinking education*. USP Press; 2014.
20. Vaiotei TM. Talanoa research methodology: A developing position on Pacific research. *Waikato Journal of Education* 2006; **12**(1): 21-34.
21. Tunufa'i L. Pacific research: Rethinking the Talanoa 'methodology'. *New Zealand Sociology* 2016; **31**(7): 227-39.
22. Tamasese K, Peteru C, Waldegrave C, Bush A. Ole Taeao Afua, the new morning: A qualitative investigation into Samoan perspectives on mental health and culturally appropriate services. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 2005; **39**(4): 300-9.
23. Ioane J. Pasifika and psychology-Are we there yet? *Psychology Aotearoa* 2017; **9**(2): 70-3.
24. Manuela S, Sibley CG. The Pacific Identity and Wellbeing Scale-Revised (PIWBS-R). *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* 2015; **21**(1): 146.
25. Achenbach TM, Ruffle TM. The Child Behavior Checklist and related forms for assessing behavioral/emotional problems and competencies. *Pediatrics in Review* 2000; **21**(8): 265-71.
26. World Health Organization. *WHOQOL-SRPB field-test instrument*: WHOQOL spirituality, religiousness and personal beliefs (SRPB) field-test instrument: the WHOQOL-100 questions plus 32 SRPB questions, 2012 revision. World Health Organization 2002.
27. Latai-Niusulu A, Nel E, Binns T. Positionality and protocol in field research: Undertaking community-based investigations in Samoa. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 2020; **61**(1): 71-84.
28. Anae M. Research for better Pacific schooling in New Zealand: Teu le va – a Samoan perspective. *MAI Review* 2010; **1**(1): 1-24.
29. Ioane J, Tofaeono R, Lambie I. Pasifika youth with harmful sexual behaviour differ from other young people and need a different response. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology* 2021; **50**(3).
30. Sauni SL. Samoan Research Methodology: The Ula - A New Paradigm. *Pacific-Asian Education Journal* 2011; **23**(2).
31. Cammock R, Lovell S, Vaka S. Cultural values influencing iTaukei women's discussion of family planning in the home. *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 2022: 1-16.
32. Reynolds M. Relating to Va: Re-viewing the concept of relationships in Pasifika education in Aotearoa New Zealand. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples* 2016; **12**(2): 190-202.
33. Pereira, FT. *Engaging Pasifika. Launch of Cultural Competence Programme*; 2011. Le Va.
34. Suaalii-Sauni T. The va and kaupapa Māori. *Critical Conversations in Kaupapa Māori* 2017: 132-44.
35. Pereira, FT. Personal communication; 26 June 2023.
36. Ioane J, Percival T, Laban W, Lambie I. All-of-community by all-of-government: reaching Pacific people in Aotearoa New Zealand during the COVID-19 pandemic. *The New Zealand Medical Journal* 2021; **134**(1533): 96-103.

A note about the researcher:

Folasaitu Associate Professor Julia Ioane is from the villages of Fasito'outa, Leauva'a, Pu'apu'a and Lotofaga. Her chief title is from the village of Fasito'outa. She was born and raised in south Auckland, Aotearoa NZ, bilingual in Samoan and English and is married to a Samoan from Matatufu and Leauva'a. She is the child of a plantation owner and teacher who, like many Pasifika families, migrated to Aotearoa NZ in the late 1960s/early 1970s for better opportunities for their families back home and their future families in Aotearoa NZ. Her father became a factory worker and mother a cleaner, with strong values instilled with their three daughters.

Julia's relevant employment began as a youth worker and mental health worker in South Auckland, manager with Special Education and then as a call-taker in NZ Police whilst training to be registered as a clinical psychologist. Her clinical practice involves working across the various Court jurisdictions and providing assessment and therapy to children, young people and their families in care and protection and youth justice. She has worked in Samoa as a consultant psychologist to the judiciary and providing support and training to professionals in their justice system. She is also registered as a psychologist in Australia, recently serving their Children's Court. She is currently teaching in the clinical psychology programme at Massey University and continues to conduct and supervise research in the area of justice and mental health. Email: J.ioane@massey.ac.nz

