

A Residential Satisfaction Assessment of Public Rental Board Housing in the Greater Suva Urban Area, Fiji Islands

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Abstract

Residential satisfaction is an important measure of overall quality of life and determines how individuals respond to their housing environment. The study examines the level of tenants' satisfaction with Public Rental Board (PRB) flats in the Greater Suva Urban Area (GSUA), Fiji. The objective of the study is to investigate the factors affecting the residential satisfaction of tenants of PRB rental flats using a survey instrument measuring tenants' perceptive responses to the various facets of their housing environment. The study finds that PRB tenants have relatively higher satisfaction level for the building quality features and neighbourhood factors, whilst lower satisfaction level is recorded for the building physical design and housing management services. Physical building design features such as the size of bedrooms, dining areas, together with housing management features such as handling of tenant's complaints, and treatment of tenants, have been rated by tenants to be below satisfactory levels. The factorial ANOVA on the survey data indicates that there are no statistically significant differences in residential satisfaction levels attributed to independent variables such as age, education level, and family type. However, residential satisfaction levels were statistically different among the six PRB estates examined in the study.

Keywords: Greater Suva Urban Area; Housing; Public Rental Board; Residential Satisfaction

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Introduction

The provision of affordable and good quality housing is an ongoing development concern for Fiji. The Public Rental Board (PRB) is a statutory body formed in 1989 with the mandate of developing and managing Fiji's public rental housing estates. Its establishment was in response to the recommendation of the World Bank to have a separate body corporate to manage the Housing Authority's (HA) rental flats (Public Rental Board, 2018). Amendments to the Housing Act of Fiji (Cap 267) provided the legislative basis for the establishment of the PRB. At the time of its establishment, the Board owned a total of 24 rental estates nationwide with an offering of 1,753 rental flats. The central role of the PRB is the provision of quality and affordable rental flats to low-income earners on a transitional basis. It is envisaged that PRB tenants will eventually take the pathway into home ownership. Since independence, public rental housing has continued to be an important tenure option in Fiji's national housing framework.

The steady rate of urbanization and concentration of job opportunities in towns and cities impinges on the ability of urban households to access good quality and affordable housing in the open market (Gabriel, 2008; Hassan, 2005). In 2016 alone, the PRB records a total of 1,020 applications registered in their waiting list from a total of 1,561 flats on offer (Public Rental Board, 2016). Notwithstanding the importance of public rental housing, there has been no empirical study to examine the residential satisfaction levels of PRB tenants. Residential satisfaction assessments are important for a number of reasons. Firstly, such assessments provide a basis to evaluate the success or otherwise of public housing provisions from the occupier's point of view (Bruin & Cook, 1997; Huang & Du, 2015; Liu, 1999; Mohammad-Abdul & Mohamed, 2012). Secondly, residential satisfaction studies provide useful information for planners, developers, and policy makers to improve the physical design and planning of housing, engendering better housing delivery outcomes (Mohammad-Abdul & Mahfoud, 2015; Mohammad-Abdul & Mohamed, 2012; Ukoha & Beamish, 1997). Thirdly, knowledge about the factors that shape residential satisfaction is critical in understanding the mobility decision process of households (Liu, 1999; Salleh, 2008). Finally, housing satisfaction studies are recognized as an important component of overall quality of life. An improvement in housing conditions translates to an overall betterment of an individual's quality of life (Amérigo & Aragonés, 1997; Galster & Hesser, 1981; Mohammad-Abdul & Mohamed, 2012).

Residential satisfaction is a complex construct. The complexity is attributed to the

multidimensional and fluid nature of the interaction between individuals and their housing environment. As a utilitarian concept, residential satisfaction measures the difference between actual and desired housing and neighbourhood situations (Galster & Hesser, 1981). Francescato & Weidemann (1979) define residential satisfaction as the emotional response to a person's dwelling, or the positive and negative feelings that occupants have for where they reside. Generally, the satisfaction level of a household with their present housing conditions is evidenced by either the absence or almost nonexistence of any complaints, or, conversely, by the high degree of congruence between the household's actual and desired housing situations (Mohit et al., 2010). A household assesses their satisfaction levels in terms of how well their current housing is compatible with the observed cultural and family norms that exist (Morris et al., 1976; Morris & Winter, 1975).

This study investigates the residential satisfaction levels of PRB housing tenants using a survey questionnaire targeted at six of the PRB rental estates situated within the GSUA. The GSUA is selected mainly due to the high concentration of PRB flats in the area as well as the diversity of the public rental unit types on offer. The outcome of the study will be instructive in providing feedback that will engender better planning, development, and delivery of public rental housing services in Fiji. Furthermore, the research outcome will assist in the formulation of policy prescriptions that will be more responsive in meeting the needs of the growing number of low-medium income households that are (or will be) served by the PRB.

Housing in Fiji and the GSUA

The National Housing Policy of 2011 (NHP) is the Fijian government's official response towards affordable housing for all Fijians. The NHP outlines the government's broad strategic outlook in addressing the housing challenge in Fiji, with explicit policy prescriptions toward the attainment of better housing outcomes. Rental housing in Fiji is often a neglected sector because of the general bias towards home ownership, as evident in the government's initiatives such as the First Home Owners (FHO) grant and value-added-tax refunds for home building materials. The NHP highlights that demand for public housing in Fiji will continue to grow in parallel with urbanization and the concomitant increase in urban population. Furthermore, it also highlights potential that exists for better coordination between the private sector and housing agencies such as HA and PRB in the area of land development for housing. Access to decent and affordable housing for low income groups will continue to be a challenge in Fiji in view of the growing number of low-income households and their limited affordability (Fiji Government, 2011).

The various housing tenure options in the GSUA consists of private owner-occupied homes/residences, multi-unit apartments, private and public rental, as well housing provided in the informal sector under squatter and *vakavanua*-type land-housing arrangements. According to a UN-Habitat report (2012), an estimated 17 per cent of the GSUA's population – some 44,000 people – live in 86 informal settlements located across the geographical area. Barr (2007) asserts that squatter housing prevails due to an inadequate supply of affordable, low-cost housing in urban areas. Land availability is an important precondition to large-scale land development for housing. The important stakeholders involved in housing provision in Fiji include the Ministry of Local Government, Housing and Environment; I-Taukei Land Trust Board (TLTB); Ministry of Lands & Mineral Resources; Housing Authority; Public Rental Board; Director of Town & Country Planning (DTCP); City/Town councils; commercial banks, as well as private real estate developers and investors.

The Fiji NHP addresses some important areas in relation to PRB operation. The first is the high management and maintenance costs of the PRB rental housing stock and the need to balance PRB's social and commercial responsibilities to safeguard the viability of its operations. In addition, tighter screening of PRB tenants will assist in identifying those who can afford to graduate to market-rented houses or into home ownership, thus allowing more deserving tenants to access PRB housing (Fiji Government, 2011). The strategies proposed under the NHP to address these concerns include transferring the maintenance cost of public housing to tenants, and ensuring that rentals of public housing are appropriately indexed to market to avoid distortions in the rental market, in turn improving cost recovery of public housing for reinvestment. These strategies, once in force, will undoubtedly influence the future operations of PRB and in turn affect the residential satisfaction levels of PRB tenants with their occupied housing units.

Literature Review

Residential satisfaction studies have been classified into two broad strands (Weidemann & Anderson, 1985). The first strand conceptualizes residential satisfaction as a criterion of evaluating residential quality. Under this strand, residential satisfaction is a dependent variable that is influenced by the user's ranking of a range of housing attributes. These attributes encompass all facets of an individual's housing environment (Amérigo & Aragonés, 1990). In the second category, residential satisfaction is treated as a variable that influences residential mobility decisions. Under this strand, residential satisfaction is construed as a predictor of behaviour and, therefore, an independent variable (Amérigo &

Aragonés, 1997; Américo & Aragonés, 1990). This conceptual framing postulates that housing satisfaction level will influence the behaviour of the occupier to either make changes to their housing unit, or move to another housing unit in order to bring their current housing needs and housing services offered into alignment. Stated differently, residential satisfaction acts as a predictor of the likelihood of household behaviour in making housing adjustment decision (Morris, et al., 1976; Weidemann & Anderson, 1985).

Residential satisfaction theory, in essence, examines the complex interaction between households and their residential environment. Earlier writing by Rossi (1955) introduced the notion of “housing need” to elucidate the notion of residential satisfaction, stating in effect that housing needs and aspirations change as the household unit progresses through different life cycle stages. Rossi observes that housing needs arise directly from the composition of the family or household. This idea has been somewhat expanded by Rodgers (1962), as cited in Morris & Winter (1975), in that it seems preferable to base the idea of changing housing needs on the progression of norms that governs a family's behaviour as the household composition changes. As the composition and size of the family changes over the course of time, the norms that apply to them change as well, influencing their satisfaction level. Residential satisfaction arises only to the extent that the household perceives that their current housing meets their housing needs.

Further theoretical contributions to the subject of residential satisfaction by Morris & Winter (1975) introduced the concept of “housing deficit”. They asserted that households judge their housing condition according to two types of norms, personal and cultural, which may not coincide. Any incongruity between the actual housing needs and housing norms results in a housing deficit, which engenders a state of residential dissatisfaction, leading further to some form of housing adjustment. This housing adjustment may be either in-situ, such as revisiting their housing needs and aspirations in order to reconcile the incongruity, or it may take the form of improvement to their existing housing conditions through remodelling or eventually, if incongruity persists, the household may move to another place and bring their housing into conformity with their aspirations and needs (Morris & Winter, 1978, as cited in Mohit, et al., 2010). As alluded to by Speare (1974), dissatisfaction attributed to housing deficiency can result from a change in the needs of the household, change in the social and physical amenities offered by a particular location, or a change in the normative standards used to evaluate these factors.

The work of George (1985) is also instructive in adding to the theory of residential

satisfaction, highlighting the notion of psychological construction of residential satisfaction. He theorized that individuals may be seen as cognitively constructing a reference condition for each particular facet of their residential situation. The quantity or quality of the given facet implied by the reference point will depend on the individual self-assessed needs and aspirations. If the current housing situation is perceived to be in proximate congruence with (or superior to) the reference situation, a psychological state of satisfaction should be manifested. If, on the contrary, the current housing situation falls short of the reference condition, then the households may either choose to reconcile the incongruence by adaptation, or they may reduce their dissatisfaction by altering the conditions of the present dwelling unit or moving to another more congruent residential situation (Foote et al., 1960, as cited in Galster, 1987).

There is little consensus in the literature on the general pattern of residential satisfaction and the specific factors that influence it across different socio-economic groupings, countries, and cultures (Ibem et al., 2013; Mohammad-Abdul & Mohamed, 2012; Mohit et al., 2010). Variation in residential satisfaction scores can be attributed to factors such as socio-economic and demo-graphic characteristics of residents, the housing tenure options, housing quality & standards, and the housing acquisition process, as well as differences in values and meaning that people attach to their residential environment (Ibem et al., 2013). These differences justify the need for country-specific assessment of residential satisfaction. Furthermore, residential satisfaction is an inherently dynamic process, capturing the contextual changes in the interactions between individuals and households with their housing environment over time and space.

The extant literature on residential satisfaction identifies a broad range of housing factors that directly or indirectly influence residential satisfaction levels. These individual factors contribute to a composite measure of residential satisfaction score (Galster, 1987). The various factors drawn from the literature include building physical features and design, the housing services and condition, public facilities provided, social environment within the housing area, housing management practices, and etc. (Amérigo & Aragonés, 1997; Huang & Du, 2015; Liu, 1999; Mohammad-Abdul & Mahfoud, 2015; Mohammad-Abdul & Mohamed, 2012; Ukoha & Beamish, 1997; Weidemann & Anderson, 1985). Building physical features include the number and size of bedrooms, privacy, and location of kitchen, etc., whilst building quality features relate to the level of amenities and services offered. The neighbourhood amenity factors include distance to school, employment, medical, public transport, community centres, and shopping facilities. Management

services, particularly in the context of public housing, relates to the enforcement of rules, handling of complaints, etc. In addition, residential satisfaction is also hypothesized to change in relation to the socio-economic characteristics of the residents, covering aspects such as household/tenants age, income, duration of residence, and housing tenure status.

The effects of the age of the resident(s) on residential satisfaction level has been mixed. For in-stance, Chapman & Lombard (2006), and Lu (1999) find that older people are more satisfied with their housing services, while in a more recent study, Mohit, et al. (2010) argued that the age of the household is negatively related to housing satisfaction. Another important variable considered is the income level of the household and its effect on residential satisfaction. There is consensus in the literature that income exerts a positive effect on residential satisfaction. For in-stance, Yearns (1972) as cited in Mohit & Raja (2014), observed that a significant relationship exists between income and housing satisfaction, a sentiment supported by the work of Adriaanse (2007), and Lu (1999), who also affirmed that higher-income households are generally satisfied with their housing. The reason for this, as Frank (2009) contends, is that higher-income families have more housing options and are also able to move to a suitable house in an attractive neighbourhood, which may result in a relatively higher level of satisfaction.

In addition to socio-demographic variables, studies on residential satisfaction have also investigated the effects of the housing physical characteristics. Housing physical attributes have been found to have a significant effect on housing satisfaction, either positively or negatively (Jiboye, 2009; Parkes et al., 2002). The housing unit's physical characteristics include the size and position of kitchen space, laundry and washing areas, size of living area and dining area, number of bedrooms and bathrooms, etc. Housing quality variables include issues such as privacy, housing services, safety, lighting, and ventilation of the house (Mohit & Raja, 2014). In assessing satisfaction in public housing in Nigeria, Ibem, et al. (2013) observed that residents of public housing in Ogun State were generally dissatisfied with their housing conditions, but enjoy higher satisfaction levels with dwelling unit features than neighbourhood facilities and services. Furthermore, building features such as number of bedrooms, size and location of kitchen, and quality of housing units have shown to be strongly related to residential satisfaction (Noriza & Nadarajah, 2010). Morris, et al. (1976) found a positive relationship between number of rooms and housing satisfaction. Whilst Speare (1970), and Stewart & Mccown (1977) found a negative relationship between person-per-room ratio and housing satisfaction.

The neighbourhood profile of the area also affects residential satisfaction levels. Lu (1999) argues that neighbourhood satisfaction has been shown to be an important predictor of dwelling satisfaction. In their study, neighbourhood amenities of the area include elements such as distances travelled to school, access to employment and medical centres, recreational and civic opportunities, as well as the geographical location of housing estates. Accessibility to the public transportation, community and shopping facilities, and physical environment variables have been noted as predictors of neighbourhood satisfaction (Ozo, 1990). The study by Mohammad-Abdul & Mohamed (2012) in Maldives showed that the majority of the residents in public housing were not highly satisfied with their present housing situation, but for services and public facilities the satisfaction levels were higher. In another study, using the Hangzhou public housing household survey data in China, Huang & Du (2015) observed that neighbourhood environment, public facilities, and housing characteristics are the main factors that influence residential satisfaction. Lastly, in a Korean study, Jun & Jeong (2018) observed that social mix influences residential satisfaction, with higher satisfaction levels recorded for housing that randomly mixes public housing with private housing in the same building (in comparison to buildings devoted entirely to only public housing).

The foregoing review indicates that residential satisfaction comprises satisfaction with various aspects of the housing unit, which taken together provides a composite measure of the satisfaction level. Furthermore, overall satisfaction level is specific to a particular housing context. The contexts that give rise to differences in empirical findings relates to the type of housing studied and the housing delivery methods adopted, the culture of housing of the area or country, and the housing policy adopted, in addition to the idiosyncrasies of the neighbourhood and development progress of the country itself, etc. For this reason, residential satisfaction assessments must be tailored to capture the specific context of the study, and conclusions drawn must be interpreted with these caveats in mind.

Objective of the Study

The aim of the paper is to identify the factors influencing PRB tenant's satisfaction level with their occupied rental units and to further assess the effects of these factors on overall residential satisfaction. The objectives guiding this research are as follows:

- a) To examine the factors affecting the overall residential satisfaction/dissatisfaction with PRB occupied rental flats
- b) To explore the levels of residential satisfaction/dissatisfaction perceived by the tenants of PRB housing

Research Methodology

The data for this study is collected through a survey questionnaire based on four housing factors, namely physical features & designs, housing quality and amenities, neighbourhood services & amenities, and housing management services. The field survey was administered by University of the South Pacific (USP) Land Management major students that have undergone the requisite training on administering the survey competently and effectively. The survey was carried out over a period two months, allowing ample time for follow-ups on the questionnaires. The research adopts a stratified, random sampling method in the selection of the PRB estates for the study, guided by the motive of ensuring balance between old and newer estates, location of the estates, as well as obtaining a good mix of the different types of rental units.

There are 14 PRB housing estates in the study area, with a combined total rental offering of 956 flats (see Appendix A). The study focused on six out of the 14 PRB estates, namely Nadera, Raiwai (Kia Street), Raiwai (MacFarlane), Toorak (Charles Street), Nabua (Mead Road), and the new Kalabu estate. Respondents (tenants) that were surveyed were selected randomly from the six estates. The survey questionnaire was piloted first to student researchers to ensure that the questions asked are clearly formulated and easy to understand. A total of 270 questionnaires were administered across the six study sites and all questionnaires were returned. A total of 18 questionnaires were deemed incomplete (missing values), and thus not unusable for analysis. This resulted in a total valid count of 252 questionnaires, a sample representing 26.4% of the total number of households in the chosen area of study.

The survey questionnaire is designed to measure residential satisfaction levels following a Likert Scale format, where the respondents were asked to evaluate their responses to a series of variables under each of the four broad housing factors (components). The overall satisfaction for each variable was analysed based on a mean score of 3.00 as a positive indication of satisfaction, and values below 3.00 indicating dissatisfaction. The questionnaire structure consists of five sections, with section 1 pertaining to the respondent's/household's basic information. Section 2 comprises variables measuring satisfaction with physical building design features, section 3 addresses building quality and services. Housing neighbourhood features is in section 4, and the final section captures questions measuring satisfaction with PRB housing management services. Overall satisfaction for each housing factor comprises an aggregation of the elemental scores across each of the variables used to measure that factor/component (see Table 1 below).

Table 1. Residential Factors and Variables Selected for Measuring Residential Satisfaction

Factors	Variables
Housing Physical Features	Position of stairs & access to house, position of living rooms, position of kitchen, position of toilet & shower, size of living room, kitchen, bedroom, dining rooms, no. of bedrooms, privacy level, study space, cyclone integrity of the building
Housing Quality Features	Water pressure level in flat, quality of exterior and interior construction, quality of flooring, quality of windows, quality of lightings, quality of interior & exterior painting, quality of doors, plumbing quality
Housing Neighbourhood Features	Accessibility to schools, shopping centres, medical facilities, public transport, recreational facilities, churches and places of worship, accessibility to police stations/postal services, security level of neighbourhood, neighbourhood relations and connectedness
Management Services	Garbage collection, rental level & review, PRB rules & regulations, enforcement, tenant relations, handling of tenants' complaints, response to repair requests

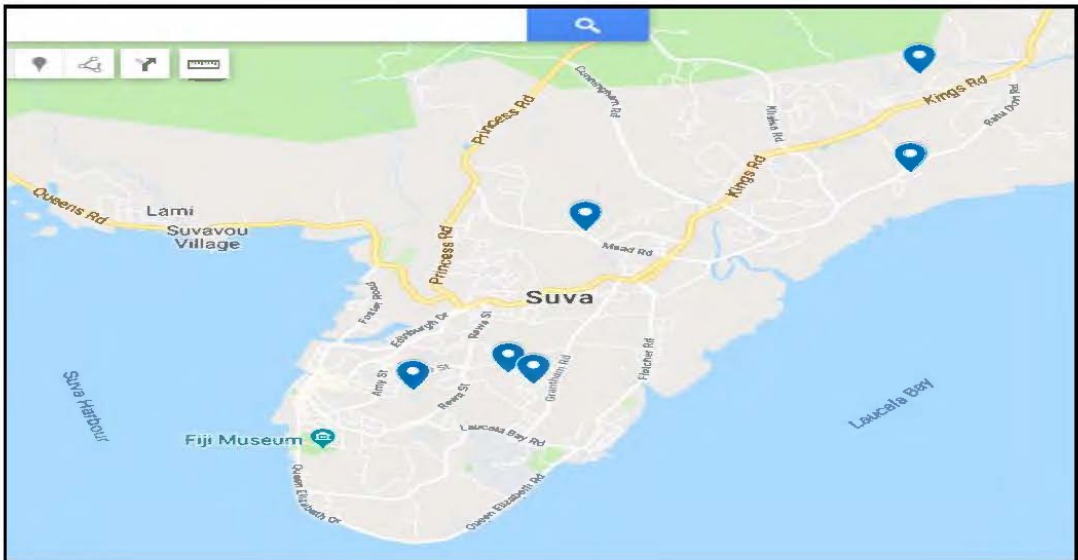
Data collected was analysed through SPSS for frequency distribution of the variables under study, including mean, standard deviation, and percentage scores of satisfactions. Further analysis was carried out using cross tabulation, correlation analysis (Pearson r), and a regression analysis of variables. Multiple linear regression analysis was applied by regressing the variables capturing the various housing components against the overall residential satisfaction scores to ascertain which of the predictor variables exerts the largest influence on the overall satisfaction levels with PRB housing estates. Factorial ANOVA tests were also conducted to test residential satisfaction levels across different locations (estates) and socio-economic variables such as household type, education level, age group, as well as housing unit type occupied.

The Study Area

The study examines tenants' residential satisfaction with PRB flats located within the GSUA. The GSUA covers the municipal areas of Suva, Nasinu, Lami, and Nausori. According to a UN Habitat report (2012) on Fiji's urban profile, the GSUA

has a population of 244,000, and hosts 55% of Fiji's urban population. Furthermore, the GSUA is Fiji's economic centre, generating an estimated 30% of the national gross domestic product. Suva is the capital of Fiji, where the seat of parliament is located, and also boasts the core of Fiji's businesses, retail and trade, education, recreation, culture, and civic functions.

Figure 1. Map of the GSUA with PRB Study Sites



Source: Google Maps

The townships of Lami and Nasinu are satellite towns that formed as a result of the gradual expansion of the economic base of Suva. This urban expansion, coupled with intensifying urbanization and denser urban land-use activities, fostered a steady growth of these municipalities. The six PRB estates selected for this study include Nadera, Mead Road, Raiwai (McFarlane), Raiwai (Kia Street), Charles Street (Toorak), and the new Kalabu PRB estate, which opened in 2016. The PRB rental unit type on offer to prospective tenant's ranges from open rooms units, one-bedroom units as well as two-bedroom units. The PRB estates vary in term of age, size and physical design with a mix of two and three storey's buildings and single storey duplexes.

Empirical Results & Discussion

The socioeconomic profile of the sample ($N = 252$) is summarized in Table 2. In terms of the gender profile of respondents, approximately 60% of those interviewed are females and the remaining 40% are males. In regards to the age group of the respondents, those that fall in the 18-30-year-old category represent 28.6% of the

sample, whilst 44% of the sample fall in the 31-50-year-old category, and the remaining 27.4% are 51 years old and above. In terms of marital status, approximately 58.7% of the respondents are legally married couples, with the balance categorized as single adults (24.2%), widows/widowers (8.7%), and those in the divorced and de-facto category (8.3%).

Table 2. Socio-economic Characteristics of the Survey Respondents

Characteristics		Frequency	Percent	Cum. Percent
Gender	Female	152	60.3	60.3
	Male	100	39.7	100.0
Age	≥ 51 years	69	27.4	27.4
	31-50 years	111	44.0	71.4
	18-30 years	72	28.6	100.0
Marital Status	Widow/Widower	22	8.7	8.7
	Divorced & Defacto	21	8.3	17.1
	Single	61	24.2	41.3
	Married	148	58.7	100.0
Ethnicity	Others	11	4.4	4.4
	Rotuman	13	5.2	9.5
	Indo-Fijian	26	10.3	19.8
	iTaukei	202	80.2	100.0
Education	Tertiary	108	42.9	42.9
	Secondary level	129	51.1	94.0
	Primary level & no education	15	6.0	100.0
	No formal education	6	2.4	100.0
Living Arrangement	Extended family	68	27.0	27.0
	Non relation & Alone	21	8.3	35.3
	Single parent family	36	14.3	49.6
	Nuclear (two parent)	127	50.4	100.0
Building Unit Type	flat in multi-unit	194	77.0	77.0
	semi-detached	58	23.0	100.0
No. of Bedrooms	Open room	117	46.4	46.4
	two bedrooms	49	19.4	65.9
	one bedroom	86	34.1	100.0
Employment	No	16	6.3	7.9
	Yes	236	93.7	100.0
Employment Type	Others	27	11.4	11.4
	NGO's	3	1.3	12.7
	Self Employed	15	6.4	19.1
	Private Firm	142	60.2	79.3
	Civil Servant	49	20.8	100.0
Characteristics	Mean	Standard Deviation		
Family Size	4.67	1.92		
Household Income	714.74	467.57		

The ethnic composition of the sample households comprises of 80.2% iTaukei, 10.3% Indo-Fijian, 10.3% Rotuman, and 4.4% other. In terms of education level, most of the respondents (51.2%) reached as far as secondary school level education, whilst 42.9% attended tertiary level education (certificate level and higher), with the remaining 6% capturing those educated up to primary school level. The family living arrangements of most of the households surveyed is classified as a nuclear family type arrangement (50.4%), with the remaining categories comprising extended-family type arrangements (27%), single-parent families (14.3%), and those living with a non-relation or living alone (4.4%).

PRB offers a number of different building types. In the sample, 73.8% of the buildings occupied were multi-unit residential buildings of two floor levels or higher, while 23.0% were single-storey, semi-detached buildings, such as duplexes and row housing. In terms of specific rental-unit type, from the total PRB units surveyed, 46.4% of the units were open-plan rooms, with 34.1% classified as one-bedroom units, and 19.4% classified as two-bedroom units. In regards to the employment profile of the households surveyed, 92.1% of the households have at least one family member actively employed, with the balance of those households being on pension or social welfare, or supported by family relations (7.9%). For households surveyed that are in formal employment, 56.3% are employed in the private sector, with 18.7% employed in the government/public sector, whilst the balance (25%) comprises those classified as either self-employed or employed with non-government organizations (NGO's). The average monthly household income for the surveyed households is approximately FJD 714.00, and the average household size is approximately five persons.

Tenant's Satisfaction with Housing/Residential Environment

The study examines the residential satisfaction of tenants of PRB based on four factors/components of the tenants' housing environment, namely physical design features of the housing unit, quality and amenities of the housing unit, neighbourhood services, and amenities and housing management services. A total of 37 variables have been used to capture the four housing factors/components (Table 1). Table 3 provides an overall summary of residential satisfaction scores across each of the four housing components. The overall count under each housing component varies depending on the total number of variables used to explain that housing factors/component.

The survey results indicate that, overall, 38% of the respondents were either “very dissatisfied” or “dissatisfied” with the physical features of the housing unit, while 40.5% were either “very satisfied” or “satisfied”, and the balance (21%) remain “neutral”. In regards to the building amenities and quality, more than half (52%) were either “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the building amenities and quality level, whilst 27% were either “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied”. For neighbourhood services and amenities, the majority of the respondents (76.9%) were either “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the residential neighbourhood they are located in, with only 14% expressing that they were “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied” with the neighbourhood aspect of their housing environment. In regards to the perception of tenants on PRB housing management service and functions, 46% of the respondents indicated that they were either “satisfied” or “very satisfied”, 18% were “neutral”, whilst 35% expressed that they were “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied” about the management services.

Satisfaction with physical characteristics of the rental unit

In this study, 12 variables relating to the physical design characteristics of the housing units were examined. The results of the survey indicate that the households surveyed expressed the highest level of satisfaction with the position of the stairs and/or access point to the housing unit ($MS = 3.47$), as well as the position of the toilet unit ($MS = 3.22$), and the position of the rooms ($MS = 3.10$). The respondents expressed the most dissatisfaction with the availability of space for study ($MS = 2.52$), the size of the area designated for dining ($MS = 2.59$), the privacy-level of the housing units ($MS = 2.66$), the size of the area kitchen or cooking area ($MS = 2.77$), as well as the cyclone worthiness of the building ($MS = 2.72$).

Satisfaction with the Housing Unit Quality & Amenity

A total of nine variables were utilized in this study to measure the general satisfaction level with the building quality & amenity level. In general, the respondents were most satisfied with the water pressure level in the building ($MS = 3.92$), as well as the quality of the lighting used in the housing unit ($MS = 3.41$), and the quality of the flooring system ($MS = 3.34$). By contrast, the variables that the respondents were most dissatisfied about include the functionality of the plumbing system of the units ($MS = 2.88$) as well as the quality of the doors ($MS = 2.99$). Overall, it is observed that the respondents were generally satisfied with the quality and amenity features of the building/housing units.

Table 3. Satisfaction with the Four Housing Factors ($N = 252$)

Housing Factors		Count	Percent
Physical Structure (12 Variables)	Very Dissatisfied	543	18.0%
	Dissatisfied	614	20.4%
	Neutral	634	21.0%
	Satisfied	1001	33.2%
	Very Satisfied	220	7.3%
	Total	3012	100.0%
Building Quality (9 variables)	Very Dissatisfied	213	9%
	Dissatisfied	406	18%
	Neutral	467	21%
	Satisfied	921	41%
	Very Satisfied	252	11%
	Total	2259	100%
Neighbourhood Quality (9 variables)	Very Dissatisfied	128	5.7%
	Dissatisfied	188	8.3%
	Neutral	206	9.1%
	Satisfied	1016	45.0%
	Very Satisfied	721	31.9%
	Total	2259	100.0%
Management Function (7 variables)	Very Dissatisfied	240	14%
	Dissatisfied	375	21%
	Neutral	323	18%
	Satisfied	517	29%
	Very Satisfied	302	17%
	Total	1757	100%

Satisfaction with the Neighbourhood Amenity of the Estate

To capture the effect of neighbourhood amenity and services on tenants' residential satisfaction, a total of nine variables were utilized. The survey results indicate that the respondents are more than satisfied with their housing neighbourhood in relation to variables such as access to shopping & retail centres ($MS = 4.25$), access to schools ($MS = 4.17$), access to a medical centre ($MS = 4.09$), access to public transport services ($MS = 4.01$), and access to a place of worship ($MS = 4.09$). This indicates that most of the PRB estates are located in neighbourhoods with good connectivity

to positive externality factors, which is apparent in locations such as Raiwai, Toorak, and Nadera. Satisfaction levels were slightly lower (albeit still more than $MSL = 3$, denoting indifference) for neighbourhood factors such as access to recreational opportunities ($MS = 3.24$), neighbourhood security level ($MS = 3.24$), and degree of neighbourhood relation and connectedness ($MS = 3.94$). The overall sentiment shared by the respondents is that they are generally very satisfied with the neighbourhood amenity level and services of PRB estates.

Satisfaction with PRB Housing Management Services

Residential satisfaction is also contingent on how well the management services are carried out routinely by the PRB. This is particularly important for public rental housing where the landlord is a public agency acting as a quasi-property management firm overseeing tenant relation issues. A total of seven variables were used to measure the efficiency and effectiveness level of various aspects of the PRB estate management functions. The results indicate that respondents are satisfied with garbage collection ($MS = 3.8$), management rules & regulations ($MS = 3.48$), and rental review process ($MS = 3.37$). The variables that tenants are least satisfied about in relation to PRB management functions relates to the handling of complaints lodged by the tenants ($MS = 2.67$) as well as the duration of time that PRB management takes to respond to repairs requested by tenants ($MS = 2.43$). Furthermore, tenants are also generally neutral (i.e., neither satisfied nor dissatisfied) about how PRB management enforces the rules and regulations of the estate ($MS = 3.04$).

Housing Factors Influencing Residential Satisfaction with PRB Rental Flats

Pearson correlation (r) analysis was carried out between the residential satisfaction scores against the scores of the four housing components used in this study (Table 5). The analysis indicates that all of the housing factors are strongly correlated with overall residential satisfaction, with the highest correlation score recorded for the building quality and amenities (.826**), followed by building physical features (.776**), management services (.701**), and neighbourhood services & amenities (.604**). This indicates that tenants consider the building physical characteristics as well as the building quality and amenities offering important variables that affect their overall satisfaction with their housing environment.

The result of person correlation analysis (Table 4) between residential satisfaction and socio-economic factors indicates that there exists statistically significant negative correlation ($\alpha = .05$) between residential satisfaction and the number of occupants, as well as the existence of family relations in the same neighbourhood.

The negative correlation between residential satisfaction and number of occupants is consistent with the findings of Speare (1974), and Mccown & Stewart (1977). Socio-economic variables such as age, marital status, income, unit type, and living arrangement positively affect residential satisfaction. On the other hand, variables such as living arrangement, employment, and length of time renting all negatively affect residential satisfaction.

Table 4. Pearson Correlation Between Housing Factors Overall Residential Satisfaction

Correlations					
	Building Quality index	Physical Feature Index	Neighbourhood Feature Index	Management Index	Overall RS Index
Building Quality Index	1	.510**	.315**	.479**	.776**
		.000	.000	.000	.000
	251	251	251	251	251
Physical Feature Index	.510**	1	.283**	.397**	.826**
	.000		.000	.000	.000
	251	251	251	251	251
Neighbourhood Feature Index	.315**	.283**	1	.316**	.604**
	.000	.000		.000	.000
	251	251	251	251	251
Management Index	.479**	.397**	.316**	1	.701**
	.000	.000	.000		.000
	251	251	251	251	251
Overall RS Index	.776**	.826**	.604**	.701**	1
	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	251	251	251	251	251

A stepwise multiple linear regression model was applied to examine the effect of all 37 variables used in the study against the overall residential satisfaction score. Following standard stepwise regression procedure (results in Table 5), the model identifies 12 variables as predictors for residential satisfaction - position of kitchen, management enforcement of tenancy rules, quality of housing exterior, size of dining place, quality of interior painting, neighbourhood relations and connectedness, bedroom sizes, management treatment of residents/tenants, as well as access to places of worship, quality of doors, and rental review. The 12 variables in the regression model explained 95% of the variation in the dependent variable – i.e., the overall satisfaction of residents (adjusted $R^2 = 0.954$, $df = 12$, $F = 410.97$, $p < 0.001$). According to the p -value, this model can be considered an appropriate scale to

measure overall satisfaction. The individual beta coefficient indicates that variables such as position of kitchen, quality of house exterior, size of bedroom & dining, accessibility to medical services, and management treatment of residents are important consideration for tenants occupying PRB rental estates. Management factors such as treatment of tenants, the enforcement of rules and regulations for all residents of the estate, as well as management handling of issues pertaining to the rental levels and review are particularly important areas for improvement highlighted by the tenants.

Table 5. Stepwise Regression Results (Variables Against Overall Residential Satisfaction Score)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	9.582	1.946		4.923	.000
Structure: position of kitchen	3.842	.363	.214	10.591	.000
Management: enforcement rules	1.995	.361	.108	5.520	.000
Quality: House exterior	3.781	.351	.179	10.762	.000
Neighbourhood: Medical Centre	3.345	.409	.143	8.174	.000
Structure: size of dining area	2.855	.387	.155	7.369	.000
Quality: Interior & ext. painting	2.068	.340	.106	6.076	.000
Neighbourhood: relation & connect	2.977	.386	.126	7.715	.000
Structure: Size of bedroom	3.465	.388	.179	8.925	.000
Management: Treatment of resident	2.360	.357	.128	6.606	.000
Neighbourhood: Access worship place	2.862	.431	.118	6.646	.000
Quality: Main External Doors	2.182	.328	.116	6.654	.000
Management: Rent review	1.810	.297	.102	6.088	.000

Dependent Variable: Residential Satisfaction overall score

Note: Adjusted $R^2 = 0.95$

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

The survey data was further analysed using factorial ANOVA, a univariate data analysis tool, to study the effect of two or more independent, categorical variables on the dependent variable. In this study, factorial ANOVA is applied to test if there are statistically significant differences in residential satisfaction scores attributed to the different level of the independent variables tested. In other words, the study tests whether the selected independent variables are statistically significant in explaining differences in residential satisfaction levels. The independent variables tested include PRB housing estates, household types, age groups, and education levels. The PRB estates variable consists of six levels (which represent the six study sites), age consists of three levels, and education attainment has three levels, whilst household types have four levels. The dependent variable is the overall residential satisfaction score for each respondent in the survey.

Following standard ANOVA procedures for data treatments, such as normality and homogeneity of variance tests, the factorial ANOVA tests hypothesis expressed the following:

- HO: There are no statistical differences in residential satisfaction attributed to the levels of the selected independent variables (i.e., PRB estates, household types, age groups, education attainment levels)
- H1: Residential satisfaction levels statistically differ across the levels of the selected independent variables (i.e., PRB estates, household types, age groups, education attainment levels)

The Factorial ANOVA test is conducted using SPSS with an alpha level of 0.05 (i.e., $\alpha = .05$). The result of the homogeneity of variance test (Levine's test) with p -value of 0.553 signifies that the dataset fulfils the homogeneity of variance assumption for factorial ANOVA tests. For the purpose of this study, only the main effects for each independent variable are examined without endeavouring to explore any interaction effects amongst the independent variables. The objective is to isolate the main effects to determine whether there exist statistically significant differences within levels of each of the independent variables.

Table 6: Factorial ANOVA Output for Residential Satisfaction

Dependent Variable: Overall RS Index

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	23213.214 ^a	12	1934.434	4.366	.000
Intercept	1251702.785	1	1251702.785	2825.094	.000
Age	508.458	2	254.229	.574	.564
Education	531.501	2	265.750	.600	.550
PRB Estate	19070.969	5	3814.194	8.609	.000
Household Type	1520.877	3	506.959	1.144	.332
Error	105449.695	238	443.066		
Total	3828765.000	251			
Corrected Total	128662.908	250			

a. *R Squared* = .180 (Adjusted *R Squared* = .139)

The findings of the factorial ANOVA (see Table 6) indicates that variables such as age, education, and household type are not statistically significant in explaining differences in residential satisfaction with *p* values of 0.564, 0.550 and 0.332 respectively, which are all greater than the rejection level of $\alpha = .05$. Thus, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected and no statistically significant main effect is observed. However, there are statistically significant differences in residential satisfaction scores among the different PRB estates with *p* value (.001) that is less than $\alpha = .05$. For the independent variable PRB estate we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there are statistically significant differences in residential satisfaction among the six PRB estates. A post-hoc test to further examine the pairwise differences within the group reveals that with the exception of Kia Street estate (which records no statistically significant differences) all other PRB estates means are statistically significantly different from the mean score for the Mead Road PRB estate (see Appendix). Residential satisfaction mean scores were the lowest for the Mead Road estate from among the six PRB estates study sites. This could be explained by the fact that Mead Road estate is characterized as one of the older and more densely populated estates due to the number of storeys of the building, as well as the fact that the unit type offered at Mead Road comprises of only open rooms units, which lack proper kitchen and adequate living spaces, in addition to its location away from main commercial centres and employment opportunities.

Conclusion

The study examined the PRB tenant's satisfaction with PRB housing estates in the

GSUA utilizing four broad housing factors/components and 37 variables. Residential satisfaction assessment is based on tenants' perception of how satisfied they are with the physical features of the housing unit, the quality and amenities provided within the housing unit, the neighbourhood services & amenities, and the PRB housing management services. The study found that, overall, the PRB tenants are most satisfied with the level of neighbourhood services and amenities, and the building quality and amenity levels, with slightly lower satisfaction levels recorded for the management services variables, and the physical features of the housing unit. Respondents expressed dissatisfaction with physical housing features such as availability of space for study, dining, privacy of the units, space for dining, and cyclone resistance status of the building. Improvement in these dimensions of the housing will lead to improvements in overall residential satisfaction for PRB housing estates.

Pearson correlation matrix of housing factors and residential satisfaction indicates that all four housing factors – physical housing features, building amenity and quality, neighbourhood service and amenities, and housing management are all positively correlated with residential satisfaction. The result of the stepwise regression analysis further indicates those variables considered to be important for tenant's satisfaction relates to building amenity variables (quality of building interior and exterior, painting, and quality of doors) as well as management factors and neighbourhood factors such as distance to medical services, and places of worship, as well as neighbourhood relations.

In general, the study reveals that tenants of PRB housing estates express lower satisfaction with the physical features of their dwelling units but expressed higher satisfaction level with building quality variables as well as variables that measure the neighbourhood amenities and services. This could be attributed to the fact that the majority of the tenants have been residing in PRB for more than 10 years and have become acclimatized to their housing neighbourhood environment. This is further supported by the number of respondents that expressed that they have no immediate desire to move out of their occupied units in the short term. Furthermore, the result of factorial ANOVA tests indicates that there are no statistically significant differences in residential satisfaction levels attributed to independent variables such as age, education level, and family type. Residential satisfaction levels were however observably different among the six PRB estates studied.

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Appendix A

ESTATE	Type of Room	Year Established	Town/City	Total Flats
Macfarlane (new)	2 Bed Room Flat	2005	Suva	43
Marfarlane (old)	1 Room Flat	1979	Suva	36
Kia Project	1 Bedroom Flat	2006	Suva	27
Kia Estate	1 Room & 1 Bedroom Flat	1979	Suva	54
Charles st	1 Room Flat	1964	Suva	94
Mead Road	1 Room Flat	1965	Nabua	168
Newtown DB STOREY	2 Bedroom Flat	1985	Nasinu	21
Newtown Project 2 & 3	1 Bedroom Flat	1995	Nasinu	51
Nadera	2 Bedroom & 1 Room Flats	1974	Nasinu	142
Kalabu	1 Bedroom	1981	Nasinu	63
Kalabu Project	1 Bedroom	1999	Nasinu	6
Kalabu Project	1 Bedroom	2004	Nasinu	5
Raiwai Pro	1 & 2 Bedroom Flats	2015	Suva	210
Kalabu Project	1 Bedroom Flat	2017	Nasinu	36
Total number of PRB flats, Greater Suva Area				956

Appendix B

(A) Residential satisfaction with housing physical features

Variables	N	Minimu m	Maxim um	Mean	Std. Deviation
Structure position stairs	252	1.00	5.00	3.4701	1.10005
Structure position rooms	252	1.00	5.00	3.1076	1.20681
Structure position kitchen	252	1.00	5.00	2.9602	1.26428
Structure position toilet	252	1.00	5.00	3.2231	1.20914
Structure size living room	252	1.00	5.00	2.9841	1.19321
Structure size kitchen	252	1.00	5.00	2.7769	1.23532
Structure size bedroom	252	1.00	5.00	3.0518	1.17359
structure size dining	252	1.00	5.00	2.5976	1.23346
Number bedrooms	252	1.00	5.00	2.8765	1.24124
Privacy level	252	1.00	5.00	2.6653	1.26157
Space study	252	1.00	5.00	2.5299	1.23049
Cyclone resist	252	1.00	5.00	2.7251	1.23293

(B) Residential satisfaction with housing quality features & amenity

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Quality water pressure	252	1.00	5.00	3.9283	.99340
Quality house exterior	252	1.00	5.00	3.3068	1.07215
Quality interior ceiling walls	252	1.00	5.00	3.1673	1.14712
Quality floors	252	1.00	5.00	3.3466	1.07860
Quality windows ventilation	252	1.00	5.00	3.1235	1.19193
Quality lighting	252	1.00	5.00	3.4143	1.11518
Quality interior ext. painting	252	1.00	5.00	3.1952	1.16178
Quality doors	252	1.00	5.00	2.9920	1.20993
Functioning plumbing	252	1.00	5.00	2.8884	1.14346

(C) Residential satisfaction with neighbourhood services & amenity

Variables	N	Minimu m	Maxi mum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Neighbourhood school	252	1.00	5.00	4.1753	.90396
Neighbourhood shopping	252	1.00	5.00	4.2590	.78017
Neighbourhood medical health	252	1.00	5.00	4.0996	.96852
Neighbourhood public transport	252	1.00	5.00	4.0120	1.08989
Neighbourhood sports recreation	252	1.00	5.00	3.2470	1.38374
Neighbourhood church temple	252	1.00	5.00	4.0996	.93490
Neighbourhood police station	252	1.00	5.00	3.9363	1.08624
Neighbourhood security level	252	1.00	5.00	3.2470	1.27230
Neighbourhood relation connect	252	1.00	5.00	3.9482	.95985

(D) Residential satisfaction with management relation & functions

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Management garbage collect	252	1.00	5.00	3.8884	1.14696
Management rent review	252	1.00	5.00	3.3705	1.27835
Management rules regulation	252	1.00	5.00	3.4821	1.21765
Management enforcement	252	1.00	5.00	3.0478	1.23195
Management treatment resident	252	1.00	5.00	3.1554	1.23441
Management handle complains	252	1.00	5.00	2.6773	1.28197
Management response repairs	252	1.00	5.00	2.4382	1.22930

Descriptive Statistics for Four Housing Factors

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overall physical features	252	1.00	5.00	2.9140	.90443
Overall quality features	252	1.00	5.00	3.6952	.95909
Overall neighbourhood features	252	1.00	5.00	3.8915	.71767
Overall housing management features	252	1.00	5.00	3.1514	.87943
Valid N (list wise)	252				

Correlation Matrix Residential Satisfaction & Socioeconomic variables

	Overall RS Index		
	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Overall RS Index	1		252
Gend	-.043	.496	252
Age	.094	.137	252
Marital	.043	.494	252
Ethnic	.009	.886	252
Edu	-.090	.153	252
Living	-.085	.180	252
Occupants	-.133	.036	252
Employ	-.017	.788	252
type employ	-.060	.360	234
Income	.004	.948	234
First time	-.102	.106	252
Rent time	-.019	.764	252
Unit type	.014	.828	252
bedrooms	-.080	.207	252
family-rel	-.127	.046	252

Result: Factorial ANOVA: (Post-Hoc Test)

Multiple Comparisons

Overall RS Index: Tukey HSD

(I) Location	(J) Location	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Nadera	MacFarlane	4.1491	4.35498	.932	-8.3635	16.6618
	Mead Road	17.3753*	4.03988	.000	5.7680	28.9827
	Bagasau	-8.3074	4.13505	.340	-20.1882	3.5733
	Kalabu	-6.4937	5.75098	.869	-23.0173	10.0299
	Kia Street	4.1138	4.76659	.955	-9.5815	17.8091
MacFarlane	Nadera	-4.1491	4.35498	.932	-16.6618	8.3635
	Mead Road	13.2262*	4.30310	.028	.8626	25.5898
	Bagasau	-12.4566	4.39257	.055	-25.0773	.1641
	Kalabu	-10.6429	5.93884	.473	-27.7062	6.4205
	Kia Street	-.0353	4.99164	1.000	-14.3772	14.3066
Mead Road	Nadera	-17.3753*	4.03988	.000	-28.9827	-5.7680
	MacFarlane	-13.2262*	4.30310	.028	-25.5898	-.8626
	Bagasau	-25.6828*	4.08037	.000	-37.4064	-13.9591
	Kalabu	-23.8690*	5.71179	.001	-40.2801	-7.4580
	Kia Street	-13.2615	4.71924	.059	-26.8208	.2977
Bagasau	Nadera	8.3074	4.13505	.340	-3.5733	20.1882
	MacFarlane	12.4566	4.39257	.055	-.1641	25.0773
	Mead Road	25.6828*	4.08037	.000	13.9591	37.4064
	Kalabu	1.8137	5.77950	1.000	-14.7918	18.4193
	Kia Street	12.4213	4.80096	.104	-1.3728	26.2153
Kalabu	Nadera	6.4937	5.75098	.869	-10.0299	23.0173
	MacFarlane	10.6429	5.93884	.473	-6.4205	27.7062
	Mead Road	23.8690*	5.71179	.001	7.4580	40.2801
	Bagasau	-1.8137	5.77950	1.000	-18.4193	14.7918
	Kia Street	10.6075	6.24695	.534	-7.3411	28.5562
Kia Street	Nadera	-4.1138	4.76659	.955	-17.8091	9.5815
	MacFarlane	.0353	4.99164	1.000	-14.3066	14.3772
	Mead Road	13.2615	4.71924	.059	-.2977	26.8208
	Bagasau	-12.4213	4.80096	.104	-26.2153	1.3728
	Kalabu	-10.6075	6.24695	.534	-28.5562	7.3411

The Newspaper as a Vehicle for Fan Participation in Fiji Rugby Union

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Abstract

Through the analysis of “Letters to the Editor” in The Fiji Times, this study aimed to uncover the opinions of fans on the management of Fiji Rugby Union (FRU). The study found the importance of letter writers’ opinions in advocating visionary-driven strategic and policy postures that are continually being assessed and benchmarked with other unions. Findings also encapsulated matters related to coach and team selection, reward systems, purposeful marketing – particularly of women’s rugby – and a proactive financial environment that are focused towards improved FRU team performances. Rugby Union being the national sport of Fiji, fans consistently demand improved and winning performances from its team. A gold medal at the Rio Olympics was the pinnacle of fans’ aspirations in Rugby sevens. In the fifteens code, with increasing numbers of Fijian professional rugby players, fans also expect higher performances than they do now. The study also found the debate and argument about keeping the Fjian flair of rugby and its cibi, the pre-game war dance, both crucial to giving the team its trademark.

Keywords: Fan participation; Fiji Rugby Union; Vision; Strategic Planning; *Cibi*; Women’s Rugby

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Introduction

Rugby was introduced to Fiji in 1884 by foreign soldiers and policemen (Rika et al., 2016). The church encouraged rugby as a replacement for traditional warfare and the *cibi*, which is performed before the start of international matches, is a reflection of this martial history. 1904 saw the establishment of a union by New Zealanders for white colonists, and the next year a native union was formed – the two were merged in 1945 (Rika et al., 2016). Fiji rugby is often depicted as involving the four Rs of *ratuism*, royalism, religion, and rugby (Rika et al., 2016). *Ratuism* refers to loyalty to the chiefly ranks of the land and royalism is the people's allegiance to the British royal family. Rugby in Fiji is often viewed as the *vaka I taukei* or the indigenous way of life (Stewart-Withers et al., 2017), and for many Fijians rugby is a passion but also a possible pathway for improved livelihood by the pursuing “rugby dream”. There are those who see Pacific Island rugby players in metropolitan clubs as a “muscle trade”, but it should rather be seen as an achievement (Stewart-Withers et al., 2017).

Shank and Beasley (1998) purported that there are two aspects of sports involvement. Sports fans' involvement can be cognitive and affective in domains. Fans display these domains through viewing television, attending sporting events, participating in sports, and reading sporting magazines and newspapers. This study examines Fiji Rugby Union (FRU) fans' involvement in writing letters to *The Fiji Times* editor as an activity that requires cognitive and affective dimensions. Shank and Beasley (1998) reinforced in the US context that, since a quarter of fans read the newspaper on a daily basis, more traditional means of communicating with fans such as the newspaper are still very relevant. Furthermore, Zagnoli and Radicchi (2010) stated that sports fan participation can be direct or indirect. Direct participation involves live spectators who are at a match, while indirect fan participants are engaged via radio, television, mobile phones, or the print media. In Fiji, many fans participate and offer their thoughts about FRU through the print media. Fans are imperative actors to the survival of FRU, as they provide the support base, and the major sport in Fiji forms a significant part of citizens' lives. Sports fans are often neglected stakeholders. As such, this study premises itself on stakeholder theory (Zagnoli & Radicchi, 2010), locating fans as important stakeholders to FRU. Fans can affect and are affected by the objectives of FRU, as policies they enact can have an impact on how rugby union is perceived in the country by stakeholders, including fans. Fans, as a too often excluded voice in sporting federations, should have their opinions considered.

Literature Review

Online-based sports discussion forums are increasingly popular today, and challenge print forms of sports fan engagement such as the newspaper. However, both are still very useful platforms for sports fandom to share opinions and interact (Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2014). Lopez-Gonzalez et al. (2014) stressed that virtual sports communities such as *marca* (a Spanish national sports newspaper) in Spain would receive 800,000 – 1,200,000 comments per month with instant responses to each other. This is not possible in an offline, print newspaper where the debate can be delayed, but fans do have opinions and should be listened to. Orr (2020) analyzed sports fans' opinions from local Israeli newspapers on the tendency to demolish sporting venues to make way for other developments. Fans are not in favour of demolishing sporting venues, as they are legitimate expressions of the country's culture and heritage. This provided an impetus to preserve valuable spaces for sports, and indicates the importance of taking seriously fans' opinions on what happens in sports.

Sport organizations need to have healthy collaborative relationships with fans, and create avenues in which they can express their opinions – such as meetings, congresses, press conferences, web sites, and newspapers – as they can have important opinions regarding strategic and managerial decisions (Zagnoli & Radicchi, 2010). Fans, are highly “opinionated” (Zagnoli & Radicchi, 2010, p. 6) individuals whose ideas should be taken on board to help influence sporting organizations' strategic choices. It is imperative for sports organizations to track the strategic behaviour and postures of stakeholders, including fans, in order to marshal positive influences on decisions and help shape strategic outcomes (Zagnoli & Radicchi, 2010). It is also important for sporting organizations to use the media to cultivate relationships, as maintaining successful relational exchanges with fans benefits the sports organization. Spectator satisfaction can be maintained by soliciting fans' voice, which refers to utilizing input of fans, and choice, which describes whether fans are engaged in decision making (Greenwell et al., 2008). Greenwell et al. (2008) found that choice plays an important role in fan satisfaction, and also suggest that “organizations do not necessarily have to give stakeholders total decision control, but rather involve the group or select representatives, in the decision making process” (p. 76). When the sporting organizations take fan opinion into consideration, it shows the value they have for the concerns of fans in the formulation of policy and practice.

The stakeholder theory is interested in who has input into decision making that would

influence the attainment of organizational goals (Crane & Ruebottom, 2011). Crane and Ruebottom (2011) asserted that the purpose of organizations is to coordinate stakeholder interests, which would be multiple and diverse. Stakeholder management is therefore critical to organizational success. The stakeholder theory is useful and stakeholder management is critical because, if treated well, those who have a stake in the organization have the possibility of contributing in many different ways, including sharing information, buying into a brand and thus benefitting financial situations, establishing loyalty, and increasing and harnessing energy towards organizational goals (Harrison et al., 2015). Stakeholder theory, according to Harrison et al. (2015), “advocates for treating all stakeholders with fairness, honesty, and even generosity” (p. 859). Treating legitimate stakeholders with respect helps create useful synergy. The stakeholder theory comes from business management, but has been applied in other disciplines such as sports, information technology, law, health care, public policy, and more (Harrison et al., 2015). Therefore, it is vital to create value for stakeholders.

Sports fans are often described as tribes, which can be “defined as a network of heterogeneous persons, in terms of gender, age, sex, and income, who are linked by a shared passion or emotion. Its members are not just only consumers but also advocates” (Dionisio et al., 2008, p. 22). Sports fans who follow a team fervently do show some form of cult and tribal behaviour in their involvement, with rituals such as collecting artifacts pertaining to the team, traveling to watch the team play, consuming the brand, and following teams on media platforms (Dionisio et al., 2008). Dionisio et al. (2008) stressed that clubs should “maintain an open channel with supporters” (p. 17), as these followers often religiously keep abreast with everything as a community. Thus, as members of a community, fans are more than simply spectators. The intensity of fans’ devotion to the club are high and are they excessively enthusiastic about their memberships. Ultimately, fans want their team to win, but devoted fans are committed to their team whether they win or not. Any club’s aim is to forge long-term relationships with its fans as brand and tribal communities. It is on the part of club owners to engage cult consumers and tribal brands for its benefit.

Rugby in Fiji

The rugby field could be seen as a historic symbol of imperial space (Dewey, 2010), but since the growth of professionalism in 1995, this space has also been a platform for expression of indigenous uniqueness and aspirations for Fiji and Pacific Islands rugby at the regional and international levels. Fiji gains international recognition and

reputation through its rugby, and many Fijians have overseas contracts, with 500 players in overseas clubs in 2014 (Kanemasu & Molnar, 2014). Fiji has a high player-population ratio in rugby, and its sevens team is among the most successful. In addition, Kanemasu and Molnar (2014) stressed that, in 2006, overseas rugby players made up 11% of worker remittances, totalling approximately F\$19million. A Fijian player at a top metropolitan rugby club could earn more than F\$1million per year, a huge contrast to the average salary in Fiji at around F\$11,000 (Kanemasu & Molnar, 2014).

Kanemasu and Molnar (2014) found that the main employment options many former professional players had were in farming, police, army, navy, prisons, self-employment, other non-rugby involvement, or left unemployed. Thus, what happens to elite rugby players after their career is important. Mannan (2017) estimates that a number of former elite Fiji rugby players are struggling, and it is important that they are mentored and encouraged to invest while playing professional rugby, as their playing years could be just ten years. As a contact sport, once a player is injured, his or her value goes down and his or her career might spiral downwards. Kanemasu and Molnar (2014), however, found that the cultural support system of families, kinship, and the communities helped many rugby players post career. Stewart-Withers et al. (2017) found that, of the 70 Fijian rugby athletes they had interviewed, rugby remittances contributed to the livelihoods of families at home and also in terms of capital accumulation. The impact on households and the community can be considerable, but also there are caveats with high demands from relatives, poor financial management, and lack of business investment, which can stifle sustained benefits (Stewart-Withers et al., 2017).

This study focused only on *The Fiji Times* and not *The Fiji Sun* – the other major newspaper in Fiji – as the letters for the whole year for *The Fiji Times* provided enough data to work with. *The Fiji Times* was established in 1869 and is the oldest newspaper in Fiji written in English (Chand, 2017). Chand (2017) noted that, with about 40,000 papers circulated on Saturdays and 21,000 during other days, it is arguably the largest newspaper in the Pacific Islands. With an online presence, the readership on Saturdays went up in 2010 to about 114,000 (Chand, 2017). Other studies that have analysed *The Fiji Times* include Chand (2017), who studied the paper's coverage on climate change issues, Connell (2007), who focused on features of *The Fiji Times* that covered positive stories of ordinary people who are achieving and valuably contributing to society, and Liligeto (2012), who compared consumer perceptions of advertising on TV and *The Fiji Times*. This is, however, the first study in Fiji to look at letter writers to *The Fiji Times* as the focus of a study on rugby. The

aim is to gauge the views of letter writers on the management of Fiji Rugby Union.

Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature and involves the analysis of letters to the editor to *The Fiji Times* on the national Fiji sevens and fifteens rugby union teams in 2012. A total of two hundred and seventy-six ($n = 276$) letters were collated from January to December of the year 2012 regarding both male and female national Fiji sevens and fifteens rugby union teams. Consequently, this study did not collect letters that concern rugby league, other rugby union leagues and tournaments, national teams at age groups, or touch rugby. This selection is because rugby union is the national sport, despite what Haravanua (2019) described as the growth of rugby league in Fiji as a notable challenge. In the Australian National Rugby League competition of 1986, players of Pacific Island descent made up only 0.7 per cent. By 1996, it was 10 per cent, 20.1 per cent in 2006, and 48 per cent by 2016 (Haravanua, 2019), so rugby league's opportunity for growth in the Pacific Islands is viable.

Data Analysis

The study incorporates Evans' (2002) method of analysing qualitative data, which involves coding and categorization. Coding requires sorting data with commonalities to categories, which are conceptual aspects of theories. Evans also states that the guidelines used to construct categories should: a) reflect research purpose, b) be exhaustive, c) originate from a single classification principle, and d) be mutually exclusive. Exclusive means that a particular data or statement clearly belongs to one category and would not fit into the other categories at all. Since this is a qualitative study, Kumar (2011) states that it should be concerned with identification of themes from the data, rather than frequencies and statistical procedures that involve numbers. However, Vogt et al. (2012) stated that quantitative data can still be categorized and recorded as qualitative. This study decides not to involve numbers and frequencies in its qualitative studies, but relies instead on themes. For example, letters about women's elite rugby made up only two of 276 in *The Fiji Times* for the whole of 2012, but these address a significant theme of gender equality and women's sports and are thus worth mentioning. The initials that accompany each quoted letter in the findings are the acronyms of the writer's first and surnames.

As suggested by Evans (2002) the letters to the editor were analysed using the following steps:

- (i) The first level of coding involved compilation of lists from the raw data. This is a simple, straightforward, and superficial initial analysis. For example, a list of

important materials extracted from the interviews totalling 90 was constructed. The list is without any particular order and included in this long list, for instance, are “Marketing of women’s rugby union”, “Attracting tier one nation tests locally”, “Short team assembly prior to test due to financial constraints”, “Debates on the war dance”, “Appreciation for management and sponsors”, “Strategies to support vision”, or “A trainer for each level of national teams”.

- (ii) Next, this large list was further refined and reduced by sorting its contents into categories. Items that fit into these categories were used to provide explanation and meaning. The categories can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Categories of information directed at the FRU by letter writers to The Fiji Times editor.



A skill that was used to establish these categories was what Evans (2003) calls “systematic comparative pairing”, conducted to ensure elimination of overlaps. This is implemented by comparing each category to each other. For example, if six categories were generated, A, B, C, D, E, and F, compare A with B, C, D, E, F. Category B is compared to C, D, E, and F, while C with D, E, F, and so forth. In this study, there are sixteen categories whose contents were systematically compared to avoid overlapping. In other words, this approach ensured that a content of a category would not fit in the other categories at all. For example, “Policy to focus on local players” is more appropriately listed under “Policy and decision-making” rather than the other categories.

Findings

This study investigated what letter writers were voicing in the management of FRU to *The Fiji Times* for each category.

New Vision

Many letter writers to *The Fiji Times* saw the importance of creating a new vision for FRU. Below are some examples:

Allow the CEO to assume office and work with the FRU board to create a new vision with the strategies to support such visions.... this must be communicated to as many people as possible dealing with rugby in Fiji. (AN, January 3, 2012, p. 9)

Fresh from the humiliation, the FRU relooked at the vision about our local players and appointed our own trained coach. This makes a lot of sense as it builds progressive career paths for our local ruggers as well as opportunity to compare the state of rugby development in Fiji alongside top rugby nations, let alone the coaching ability which held its own very well. (AM, 24 March, 2012)

These letter writers stressed the importance of the need to continually relook and create a new vision for the FRU. These recommendations were made since Fiji did not do too well in the 2011 World Cup. Fletcher and Arnold (2011) defined “vision” as the organization’s ultimate aspiration, while Aaltio-Marjosola and Takala (2000) defined a vision as an idealized goal that proposes a future better than the status quo. Reaching ultimate aspirations and better performances rather than the status quo needs a clear vision to guide change efforts and to redirect members of large and complex organizations towards a new set of activities (Moore et al., 2010). A clear vision statement for a sports organization may be a brief and simple slogan or statement, and must clearly explain, represent, or symbolize the shared purpose within the organization (Gordon, 2007). Creating such a shared vision, empowering members and stakeholders, and providing sufficient drive to mobilize others are imperative to fulfilling the vision (Folta et al., 2012; Moore et al., 2010). In order that there is a shared vision, open communication is a critical mechanism to help align members’ actions with the change goals (Moore et al., 2010) and helps to align, motivate, and inspire relevant people towards achieving that vision (Aaltio-Marjosola & Takala, 2000; Gordon, 2007).

The following letters emphasize the need to have all who have an interest in Fiji rugby to know its vision and aspirations communicated to them:

It would greatly help if each FRU employee understands the strategic function of their job and how they can bring value to the overall objectives of CEO and the coaches. (AM, 20 January, 2012)

Ensure that a good team with track record of change management are in place to drive the change... (AM, January, 12, 2012)

In realizing the team's vision, letter writers are recommending the salience of components of the FRU understanding their roles and also the awareness of others' roles. Fletcher and Arnold (2011) support this idea by emphasizing the need to recognize boundaries and value the contribution each person can create in a team culture. The FRU does have ultimate aspirations as an organization, but can also have opportunity to be open to shifting changes in the rugby union landscape, its fans' desires, and contextual realities. As noted from the quotations above, letter writers stressed keeping track of changes and managing those changes. For additional discussions on visions, these may not necessarily be about the rugby union organization itself, but the team as well. In a rugby union example, two high-profile rugby union national coaches, Rob Macqueen for Australia in 1999, and Sir Clive Woodward for England in 2003, both with business backgrounds, coached their respective teams and won world cups. Contributing to these victories were that both coaches mapped out their vision and mission statements as well as the ways in which they would engage both administrative and playing personnel (Gordon, 2007). Gordon (2007) also advocates that it is essential to write mission statements for units within the team, such as for half backs, backs, and forwards. Each statement should be a realistic and current assessment of what is possible with the players available, and should add value to the overall vision (Gordon, 2007).

Player, Coach and Team Management Selection

Letter writers, of course, have many opinions about who should be in the team or who should play. For example:

Having watched the Wellington and Las Vegas tournaments, I urgently suggest these changes: Niko Verekaita for Kolinisau, Mataiasi Savou for Rawaqa, Nakaidawa or Samu Bola for Brown and Matawalu for Vucago. This is because Niko is a speedster and a ball hunter. Mataiasi Savou is a line breaker and a speedster. Nakaidawa and Bola are both aggressive and faster than Brown, also they're ball hunters. Matawalu, a utility back and most of all always clears the ball quickly from set pieces. He is good on attack and in defence. (LS, 18 February, 2012)

Last Saturday, we had the names for those to attend the fitness test and the trials ... I would like to let the selectors know that we have a very good prop in Viliame Seuseu, who plays club rugby in NZ. (MW, 25 January, 2012)

Letters to the editor are dominated by whom fans feel should be included and whom should not, and they often have explanations as to why they think so. The reasons they offer are multiple, and, in the quotations above, letter writers cited speed, being more aggressive, being a ball hunter, someone who is good in set pieces, or fitness, as the logic behind their suggestions. Fans often have educated reasons for their suggestions, as letter writers would be knowledgeable about the game. Athlete selection, according to Fletcher and Arnold (2011) needs to be relevant and objective throughout the process. Moreover, Fletcher and Arnold state that selection processes can be relevant if there are regular reviews of the selection policies to monitor their appropriateness to the current milieu and goals.

Furthermore, there must be regular evaluation of the organization, its sporting teams, and the formal and informal evaluation of staff to ensure that they address the organisation's vision strongly (Fletcher & Arnold, 2011). Such concerns are addressed in the following:

Players who should be picked must have the heart for Fiji, strength and pride for our nation. (RP, 9 January, 2012)

I would like to stress that the Fiji sense team is not there for the development of players from one provincial side only but Fiji as a whole. (11 December, 2012)

Just a mention to the powers that be, if we could be consistent in our pool of players. Last week only four players were the remainder of the first leg and only three were in the starting line up. (LW, 9 February, 2012)

I shake my head in bewilderment as there doesn't seem to be any improvement by chopping and changing the players each time throughout this sevens series. (DC, 3 December, 2012)

Letter writers demand players who give fully into games and want consistency in both team selection and performances. It can be noted from one of the quotations that letter writers may sometimes voice concern about the composition of the team being dominantly from a provincial side only. Bradbury and Forsyth (2012) stressed that athlete selection is a complex undertaking and the diversity of performance platforms unsurprisingly indicates that there is not a single "list" of criteria.

However, as an example, John Mitchell, the coach of the New Zealand All Blacks in the 2001 and 2003 period, identified ten player selection criteria: physical qualities, present form, past form, set play skills, second phase skills, versatility, team fit on and off the field, defensive skills, mental strength, and special qualities (Bradbury & Forsyth, 2012). In order to avoid the growth in selection disputes, it is imperative to put in place clearly defined procedures and criteria, including the avoidance of ambiguous wording in selection procedural documents. This is crucial, as many selection controversies emanate from unclear and unspecified selection procedures (Bradbury & Forsyth, 2012). As seen with letter writers in this study, player selection is an area of debate in sporting teams, and having explicit criteria for the selection of teams is important. However, even with thorough criteria, different stakeholders have different viewpoints on team composition, making a certain level of debate inevitable, and fans obviously will not have a short supply of opinions.

Strategic Planning

Besides athlete selection, administrative and technical staff need to work together to ensure the team is strategically competitive and letter writers do pose their opinions as well:

The FRU/team management needs to nurture its captain (s) and not change captains every now and then. This is evident in DJ Forbes and the NZ 7s team. (TN, 17 February, 2012)

I believe if the FRU is in need of an expert I would suggest Paul Feeney come on board rather than the Auckland NPC coach. (AD, 20 January, 2012)

Fiji Rugby Union needs to think of moving Fiji rugby forward by getting an overseas coach, overseas trainer, getting a sponsor for the test match, better incentives, and selecting inform players. (NN, 21 November, 2012)

Letters writers often put forward their opinions on captaincy, coaching, sponsorship, and technical staff of the team, elements different from the general playing members of the team. Undoubtedly, nations want significant improvements and the highest performance for their teams, but the manner to do so does not have to be a copy of what happens elsewhere. Letter writers to *The Fiji Times* are frequently demanding of the coaches and team management for improved and peak performance in order to better world rankings, vigorously bridge the gap between Fiji and tier one nations, win the Rugby Sevens series, and to keep improving:

People in Fiji look at the Fiji sevens team with lot of pride and the expectations are always high. (SS, 11 December, 2012)

I appreciate what our Fiji 7s team achieved in Wellington, especially when they pulled up their socks after they were knocked down by our neighbours Tonga in the pool play. JK, 8 February, 2012)

Rugby spectators and fans could not have asked for a better match than the finals of the 2012 Hong Kong 7. (FL, 27 March, 2012)

Guys, you're half way there. It's not over yet, remember that. So go out and play to your very best. It's important to keep in mind a few things: keep your set pieces, mark your man, and most importantly, believe in yourself. (LN, 10 February, 2012)

I love the cohesion and synchronicity the most about this team. (AS, 27 March, 2012)

With the recent heartbreaking dismal performances of our 15s a side rugby team, one would think twice about waking up early in the wee hours of the morning. However, I will be 1 per cent because I am a diehard Fiji fan! (TK, 20 November, 2012)

Continued Assessment, decision making and a reward culture

Fiji rugby followers are ardent fans, so they do not expect less from their team. They want their sevens and fifteens teams to do well. In order to meet these expectations of fans and the country, this study noted that letter writers to *The Fiji Times* recommended the need for the FRU to intensely focus on the formation of a strategic plan that is feasible and can be financially supported. Letter writers recommended that these strategies need to support the visions of FRU and that they should provide clarity with managers and rugby unions. Gordon (2007) agrees with these sentiments by stating that it is important for sports leaders to develop strategies that will deliver outcomes for their aspirations. According to Berlin et al. (2007), it is important to work with stakeholders, not only to formulate a strategic plan, but to also establish a strategic sustainability plan to ensure long term viability. The following letters express these concerns:

I thank the FRU for conducting its strategic planning. This is vitally important if the FRU is to achieve its strategic, tactical and operational goals. In this day and age, the success of any organization rests on good planning. (SV, 16 July,

2012)

I believe it's not right to blame the players only. Either it's the chairman or CEO or the coach or the technical team of FRU, the captain or the players. It's all about decision-making from the top hierarchy to the bottom grassroots. (VG, 23 November, 2012)

Times are changing, we have to adapt to change and not rely on old technique. Complaining is a loser's style. (AL, 2 December, 2012)

These letter writers, among others, advocate strategic planning, informed decision making, and continually adapting to change as a consequence of constantly evolving foci; not to be caretakers of the status quo, and to be able to not only manage expectations but also overcome unnecessary resistance from stakeholders. Letter writers are suggesting consistently stimulating creativity and finding unique approaches to addressing old problems. Moreover, this study found that letter writers to *The Fiji Times* want the FRU to assess its current practices, policies and procedures, marketing, operations, benefits, allowances and compare them with current market practices elsewhere:

FRU will need to maintain momentum in implementing these changes and mould its reward system and corporate culture to boost the new direction. (AM, 12 January, 2012)

I hope that we will continue to activate our 'checks and balances' in our systems and procedures to ensure that the administrative weaknesses that reared its ugly head in the lead up to the last Rugby World Cup, by the previous administration, is never given an opportunity to resurface. (SV, 16 July, 2012)

It is imperative that we continue to conduct periodic assessments of our entire operations to ensure that our journey is taking us to our desired destination including the fulfilment of all our planned outcomes. (SV, 16 July, 2012)

This can be described as benchmarking. Böhlke and Robinson (2009) identified five steps to benchmarking in elite sports: problem identification; identification of comparison partner(s); data collection; data analysis and comparison; change and evaluation; and review. In problem identification, the processes that need to be improved are identified. In terms of what letter writers to *The Fiji Times* wrote, they indicated policies and procedures, marketing, operations, and benefits and allowances as areas and processes that need to be benchmarked. In other words, these

are objectives that letter writers want the FRU to put through benchmarking. The second step entails identifying and approaching comparison partner(s) or the benchmarking subject(s). The third step involves data collection and its purpose is to gather a comprehensive understanding of the processes by which benchmarking subjects or partners achieved their performances. Fourth, data analysis and comparisons need to occur in order to develop recommendations for the improvement of the processes that are under investigation. At this stage, due to the differing contexts of the initiating organization and partner(s), it is important to judge the technical transferability of the identified practices to verify relevance. In the final step, changes need to begin at the initiating organization to incorporate the learning that took place in the benchmarking process. These changes need to subsequently be evaluated and reviewed (Böhlke & Robinson, 2009).

Improved Performance

Thus, the FRU is a major sporting organization in Fiji and has the potential for continued development and advancement through benchmarking and applying contextually relevant outcomes to such a process. An area there was demand for from letter writers is to utilize more local players, possibly due to the performances of the 2011 World Cup team:

The move by the FRU heads to mould local players is definitely a progress strategy. (AD, 29 February, 2012)

To once again cement itself as a force to be reckoned with in world rugby, credit has to go to those in leadership at Rugby House for implementing changes that will benefit the local game. (ON, 29 June, 2012)

Can FRU take a gamble and select the next Flying Fijians squad from local home-grown players only. Our national team might then be able to really fly. (BB, 13 November, 2012)

Letter writers to *The Fiji Times* mostly agreed on FRU's policy to focus more on local players and coaches. Letter writers perceive this as opportunity to improve the local game and help build progressive career paths for local rugby players and coaches. However, this is true of the sevens team, where representatives are purposely Fiji-based. The fifteens team is different, and by the 2019 rugby world cup at Japan, only seven of the squad of 32 are Fiji-based players when compared to the 1987 world cup, where only two were overseas-based players but the majority were local players (Sport 24, 2019). This also shows that, since the professional era, an

increasing number of Fiji rugby players have been recruited into clubs overseas. For example, Dewey (2010) illustrated that a significant feature of the professional era of rugby is the increase in players of Pacific Island origins in professional competitions. In Super Rugby, for instance, Pasifika players doubled from 25 in 1997, to 50 in 2007. Or 42 Pacific Islanders can be found in the top two divisions of French rugby, and some 70 in lower leagues (Dewey, 2010). Recruitment policies into national teams are important but Harris et al. (2009) cautioned that it is critical to policy delivery that there is clear communication with sporting organizations so that they understand and commit to the new policy objectives and targets, because they are central to the delivery of policies. Furthermore, Harris et al. (2009) stressed that sporting clubs within the country are well versed with policy objectives, as they have crucial roles in elevating recruitment and maintenance of new sports participants.

Playing style and Coach Development

Another area fans, as letter writers, want to be contextual, is the debate on the Fijian flair:

Fiji Rugby finds itself playing someone else's rugby, which has defence systems already in playbooks to counter them. No, don't totally disregard the IRB manuals, just add a pinch of salt while going through it.... Formulate our own brand and style of rugby that will compliment our strengths and address our weaknesses. (UE, 16 July, 2012)

We are leading the HSBC Sevens World Series after the first leg, we have won the first tournament of the series, we have a new brand of rugby this season and it's slowly bearing the fruit. (NK, 23 January, 2012)

Our sevens team and management kicked start the 2011-2012 7s series in the Gold Coast by winning and displaying our rugby flair and support play that rugby pundits and commentators commended on. As we progressed to the next two legs, again our players tried to mix physicality and individuality which not only created injuries but losing out points in the finals. (JS, 16 February, 2012)

The coaches have asserted from the beginning that Fiji's winning ways is in its traditional flair. (SR, 29 March, 2012)

Overseas rugby involves more structure and though not deliberate, it systematically chokes the Fijian flair to almost non-existence in the contracted

Fijian player. (UE, 16 July, 2012)

Letter writers to *The Fiji Times* acknowledge the FRU for many of the positive activities it implements, such as initiating valuable policy changes, protecting the image of the FRU, making correct coach and player selections, marketing talents overseas, increasing national team ratings, and for keeping the Fiji flair of playing rugby union. This does not mean disregarding the IRB manual. It means working on the strengths of the Fijian rugby athlete and keeping its flair. Fiji rugby since 1913 was managed by Europeans until independence in 1970 (Dewey, 2010). Dewey (2010) argued that the initial segregation of rugby in Fiji, and in the absence of structured coaching, may have developed the unique open style of play of Fijian rugby. In the FRU, colonial executives, for instance, in a Management Committee Meeting record of April 7, 1962 complained about the unorthodoxy that “No matter what you try to teach the Fijians as soon as they get on the field they play their own type of game” (Dewey, 2010, p. 159). This has been the comment since then, even from today’s commentators. However, authors believe it is not unorthodox but a style in itself. It does not have to be the metropolitan countries’ way of playing rugby to be the “proper style”. Tikoisuva (2013) also expressed that the modern rugby should not take away the Fijian style of rugby, and it is important that it maintains its natural running and passing game accompanied by close support.

Expectations

Since these data were collected before the 2016 Olympics, letter writers to *The Fiji Times*, as part of policy and planning priorities of the FRU, stressed the pertinence of a clear roadmap forged towards a Rio 2016 gold medal in rugby sevens. When Iliesa Delana won a gold medal in the 2012 London Paralympic Games in the F42 high jump competition, he became the first Fiji and Pacific Island athlete to win gold in the Paralympics (Devi, 2012):

When I read the headline ‘USA Sevens on quest for Olympic gold’ in the recent IRB HSBC Sevens World Series news website I thought this should be a warning as well as an inspiration to us in Fiji to strategically plan and set key goals now for the 2016 Olympics or else we will not have any chance to be able to compete with the bigger and wealthier sporting nations. (IK, 9 February, 2012)

The main aim is to win the Olympic Games. There is a need to select four sevens squads made up of young players and set a clear training roadmap for the next four years. (DN, 6 June, 2012)

The Fiji rugby sevens team won gold at the Rio Olympics (Ewart, 2016), the first gold medal at the Olympics for Fiji and in the Pacific Islands region. They overwhelmed Great Britain 43-7 to achieve gold. A day was declared a public holiday to celebrate this historic event. This sends an important message to small island nations, as Bosscher et al. (2009) emphasized, that smaller countries need to be more systematic in their talent identification and development than larger ones. They emphasize also that it may be advisable to target fewer priority sports that have real chances of success, than spread elite sport resources too widely (Bosscher et al., 2009). In light of this argument, rugby sevens should remain a high priority for the FRU and the Fiji Sports Authorities towards further Olympic glory. It would need committed and sustained funding to realize it.

Women's Rugby

In addition, in terms of being systematic and targeting few sports with real chances, Green and Oakley (2001) highlighted Australia's strategy of targeting "softer" medals for the Sydney Olympic Games, particularly in some women's sports and, as such, they focused on women's rowing, judo, and weightlifting with success. A focus on certain women's sport for elite performance can be extremely cost effective because many countries neglect women's sport (Green & Oakley, 2001). In this regard, Fiji women's Rugby sevens should be a viable venue for prioritization and development towards Olympic Games medals. There is potential in developing Fiji women's rugby sevens to being a medal prospect at the Olympics. Letter writers to *The Fiji Times* call on the FRU to market and promote women's rugby much more rigorously. Letter writers mentioned the delight of watching women's rugby and want more of the public to attend games. In this study, of the 276 letters that concern national Rugby Union teams in Fiji, only two were written on women's Rugby Union. This is indicative of the current status of women's rugby as a developing area:

Did anyone watch the women's seven-a-side games in the Hong Kong 7s. What a delight. (AL, 26 March, 2012)

Congratulations to the Fiji Women's Sevens team Fijiana for winning the Asian Women's Sevens championships beating China 15-0 in the final. With a good game plan and right mental attitude, Fijiana could hit the top come the world cup next year. (SV, 9 October, 2012)

Cava (2013) stated that attitudes of society and parents are obstacles to women's rugby union in Fiji. Some parents do not know that their girls are playing rugby union, as they were not allowed to do so but opted to participate without their parents

knowing. Furthermore, many girls in Fiji who participate in rugby are stereotyped as tomboys or lesbians (Cava, 2013). These sentiments are also similar in Wales, where there is continued maleness of rugby union and may view the female player as something of a contested ideological terrain, whose participation results in their femininity and sexuality being questioned. Participation of women in Rugby Union in Wales remains lower than other sports, remains hidden and largely ignored (Harris, 2007). In the United States, Chase (2006) also found that many players demonstrate a confrontational attitude toward the stigma of being a female rugby player and proposes that women's rugby should be an active site of resistance to the multiple, competing and often contradictory discourses of the female rugby body (Chase, 2006). The Fiji women's rugby sevens team known as the Fijiana, qualified for the Rio Olympics and were placed 8 out of 11 teams and out of medal placing, but this should be a realistic focus of investment by Fiji. According to Besnier and Brownell (2016), the Fijiana would need far more support than it is currently receiving and that the FRU should not "treat them as a distant second to the men's team". Besnier and Brownell explained the difference in sponsorship and financial support by stating that, leading to the Rio Olympics, while the men's rugby sevens team were accommodated at a luxury hotel, the Fijiana lodged at a Christian camp nearby with five players to a room with basic amenities.

Marketing/Public Relations and the war dance

In terms of the letter writers' suggestion of a vibrant website, the FRU does have a website that is maintained and provides updated news. It is a channel for the promotion of the FRU and its activities to its followers. Scherer (2006) stressed that the All Blacks web site is a hugely important marketing and communications tool that needs to be compelling to fans. The All Blacks web site is also imperative from a global perspective, since more than 75 per cent of the traffic originates from overseas (Scherer, 2006). The All Blacks is the core asset of the NZRU. It is the team, product, and brand that generate a major portion of the revenues. This brand comes with values that the team subscribes to, such as performance off and on the field, heritage surrounding the All Blacks, being authentic to fans, humility, and respect (Scherer, 2006).

The All Blacks has been synonymous with New Zealand identity, psyche, and heritage for over a century. Pre-match performance of the *haka* continues to captivate audiences around the world. The *haka* associated with the All Blacks is a cultural symbol and is a component of the attraction to the team (Scherer, 2006). The equivalent of the *haka* in Fiji is the *cibi*, but in 2015 there was an experiment to

change it. The letter writers debated on the Fiji war dance with those supporting the introduction of the *ibole* and those that want the *cibi* to remain. The *cibi* was the normal war cry at the beginning of FRU matches, but it was changed during certain matches of 2012:

Congratulations to FRU for finally doing away with the almost century old lacklustre crouch stance ‘cibi-teivovo’ with the new explosive war cry *ibole*. This is the kind of stuff we have been waiting for, for a long time to spark off and ignite the body, mind and soul into the battle field as our players face our foes in test matches in any of our sports. (MB, 20 June, 2012)

The Fiji Rugby Union is not going to perform the ai *cibi nivalu* war dance then they should traditionally return the war dance from whence it originated from, the Chiefly island of Bau. According to the FRU website, when the Fiji rugby team was preparing for its first ever tour of New Zealand in 1939, the captain of the team thought they should have a war dance similar to the New Zealand Maori haka. The captain was Fiji’s first governor general and the Vunivalu of Bau, the Late Ratu Sir George Kadavulevu Cakobau. He approached Ratu Bola, the high chief of the warrior clan of Navusaradave in Bau, for a *cibi*. As for the current war dance, it is to me, more Polynesian than it is Melanesian or Fijian. (LB, 25 June, 2012)

Letter writers who agreed on the change to the *ibole* saw it as being more explosive and more likely to set the platform for confrontation. Letter writers that do not see the war cry change as a positive change argued that it looks like a Polynesian war dance rather than a Fijian one. They also argued the need to base decisions on the traditional and historical setting and origins of the war dance. The national team has reverted to the *cibi* instead of the *ibole*. Connell (2018) noted that the captain of Fiji rugby’s first tour of New Zealand in 1939, Ratu Sir George Cakobau, made the team perform the *cibi* as its pre-match challenge to counter the *haka* (Connell, 2018). With this historical attachment, it is important the *cibi* was maintained.

Finances & Sponsorship

Just as other countries, Fiji has to also embrace globalization. In the New Zealand scenario, for instance, Scherer (2006) noted that the All Blacks inevitably has to embrace globalization to ensure competitiveness on and off the field. A radical transformation into professionalism occurred in 1995 when the New Zealand, South Africa, and Australian Rugby Unions signed a 10-year \$US555 million broadcasting rights with Rupert Murdoch’s News Limited. Critical also was that the New Zealand

Rugby Union (NZRU) secured additional sponsorship agreements with various commercial partners including its principal sponsor Adidas. Adidas, being a global organization, helps to provide a wider reach for the All Blacks (Scherer, 2006). Letter writers had these to say:

I believe Watisoni Votu departed for greener pastures to support him or his family financially. If the rugby house can afford to offer glowing salary to contracted players, I guess no one will want to leave. (AD, 29 February, 2012)

A fantastic weekend for the Fiji rugby fans around the globe. It was a tremendous effort by the team as winning at the Happy Valley is always cherished by Fiji supporters. (BK, 27 March, 2012)

You have proved that Fiji a small island is not to be messed with. You guys showed the world that no matter if other teams are king of 7s rugby but we are the masters. (RP, 28 March, 2012)

It's good to see most of the teams have Fijians like the United States, England, and the NZ team and it looks like by the end of the season, we will see two Fijian teams that is one from Fiji and one from NZ. (KM, 28 March, 2012)

Fiji Rugby has put in a lot of effort to put Fiji's name on the world map and they have achieved huge success. Rugby has drained out their finances to help aspiring players get overseas contracts in developing their career and at the same time bringing world-class teams to play here. (AC, 20 June, 2012)

The signing of the core of last season's Fiji sevens teams to overseas clubs will definitely dent the efforts of the FRU. These players will surely be missed. Fiji fans would like to wish these players well as they ply their trade overseas to earn a living. (14 July, 2012)

Professionals overseas are faced with the dilemma of having to choose to between honouring the call of national duties and confirming their allegiances to their respective clubs as this means their bread and butter. (FR, 11 November, 2012)

Fiji is no exception, as countries have to deal with a globalized rugby union platform as well as protect its national interests and policy directions. Fiji players are in rugby clubs at all levels throughout the rugby-playing nations overseas. Many also end up playing for other countries and for those that play for Fiji, they often face the dilemma of representative rugby and club allegiance. But there is no doubt that the

remittances rugby players send home are considerable. The main destinations for FRU players are New Zealand, Australia, France, England, Japan, and other Asian countries such as Malaysia. Contracted Fiji players in overseas clubs provide an avenue for significant income for players: when playing at New Zealand professional clubs, they can earn up to NZD\$200,000, or at France EUR300,000. These Fiji rugby players send in millions of dollars in remittances to the country (Molnar & Kanemasu, 2013). Countries would need to display desire and capacity to manage the impact of global sports and set new agendas to protect its national interest through the redefinition of policy instruments and the renewal of policy capacity (Tan & Bairner, 2011).

Conclusion

Fans are an important stakeholder and a means through which they communicate their opinion is through the newspaper. Therefore, it is imperative to incorporate fan's opinions on FRU. Fiji is one of few countries that refer to rugby union as its national sport. When the Fiji Rugby Sevens team plays, the whole country follows it enthusiastically, from the remote islands to Suva, the capital city. With the inclusion of rugby sevens at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, Fiji won its first gold medal. This is a major achievement. The women's sevens team too can achieve highly if the highest of sporting platforms and major financial inputs before the next Olympics are required. Many countries, particularly Western nations, have embarked on policy development and strategies for the systematic and scientific pursuit of victory in international sport. In the same token, planning and positive management are crucial and the FRU would be required to continually improve the technical and administrative capacities to produce high performance athletes.

One limitation of this study has been in choosing 2012 as the year to collect the letters to the editor, as these is some years behind current events, even though the reason was for a pre-Olympic year when Fiji would compete at the Rio Olympics. This study was more focused on the managerial opinions of the letter writers, but authors also noted a wide use of metaphors to describe rugby, which might provide ground for further research. For instance, there was a metaphor used of rugby being like having sex, as one has to be in the correct mindset to perform, players were referred to as magnificent warriors, hitting the nail on the head with a comment one agreed on, or having a set of tricks that can be weapons in the armoury. The other area worth studying in the future is the popularity of God, and religion, particularly Christianity and the Bible in the letters.

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Opportunities and Challenges of Implementing the International Valuation Standards in Fiji

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Abstract

In the face of globalisation and changing economies property valuation, standards have evolved immensely over the years with the majority of the countries – including small Pacific island nations – adopting internationally recognised valuation standards. Smaller nations' attraction to this change is understandable given it enhances users' confidence in the reports, especially foreign users who have or are looking to make significant investments in the country. However, the data infrastructure and technical expertise in these countries differ significantly from the larger countries that were involved in the design of these standards. This raises the question of whether the International Valuation Standards can be effectively implemented in smaller, Pacific nations. This paper aims to contribute to this discussion by highlighting three key categories of challenges faced by property valuation firms in Fiji, and then discussing how addressing these issues presents an opportunity for the valuation field to implement the International Valuation Standards more effectively, resulting in better property valuation practices.

Keywords: Challenges; Implementation; International Valuation Standards; Opportunities; Small Pacific Island Nations

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Introduction

Globalisation and increasing foreign property investments are compelling nations to adopt international valuation practices for greater transparency and better governance. Valuation standards at national and international levels play important roles in the promotion of ethics, integrity, and impartiality in valuers (Hemphill et al., 2014).

Anecdotal evidence found in Fiji highlighted the need for valuation standards to be implemented in the valuation sector (Myers, 2013). Not on par with international practices, the valuation profession in Fiji had been regulated by the Valuers Registration Act 1986, which was only responsible for evaluating the suitability of approved persons for registration as valuers and assessing complaints against registered valuers (ACT No. 7 of 1986, 1986). The Act lacked in-depth information on day-to-day valuation practices, codes of conduct and standards, leading to the adoption of the International Valuation Standards (IVS) from 1st January 2016. While this was meant to set good practices for members of the Fiji Institute of Valuation and Estate Management, it brought to the forefront issues faced by property valuers in small island nations that also hindered the implementation of the IVS in Fiji.

Using case studies of property valuations in Fiji, this paper identifies the key challenges and corresponding opportunities in the implementation of IVS in Fiji. The findings are classified into three key categories, Institutional, Informational, and Technical, that can form the basis of a future framework to guide implementation of international standards in small developing countries, making the process more efficient and seamless.

The following sections outline the evolution of the international property valuation field, while specifically describing the property valuation field in Fiji, thus, set the scene for this research. Subsequent sections outline the research methodology, followed by the results and a discussion of the results. Finally, the paper concludes with a summary of the findings, limitations of this study, and avenues for future research.

Literature Review

Developments in the Field of Property Valuation

In simple terms, valuation is only an estimate of the price at which an asset can

exchange for in a market transaction (Jenkins, 2002). However, according to Moore (2009), this field faces as much ambiguity in methods, principles, techniques, standards, and procedures today as it had from the time the first paper on proposed standardised procedures was presented to the Social Science Association of Philadelphia on March 28, 1874.

Property valuation has many definitions, though its underlying fundamentals remain as “procedures aimed at determining the value of a property, by a licensed person authorised by legislation to carry out property valuations” (Trojanek, 2010, p. 35). Though the tasks of property assessment dates back to pre-biblical days (Jefferies, 1991), scholars began to examine and record the best means of identifying property value in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Moore, 2009). Developments in this field continue to date, with advancements in technology resulting in computerised valuation models that assist in ensuring fair, efficient, and accurate reporting (Valentine, 1999). Over the years, many valuation standards have been produced, and many countries have either adopted international standards or developed national standards for practicing valuers based on needs (Parker, 2016). Changing economies caused increased attention on property markets, thus countries began recognising valuation as a separate field from accounting standards. Thereby, countries increasingly began introducing codes of ethics and practice guidelines from the early 1940s (New Zealand Institute of Valuers, 1995).

The basic understanding of terms used in real estate valuation practices and principles continue to evolve with changing social, economic, and political forces. Nineteenth-century valuations were predominantly based on rent capitalisation, or investment approaches due to the aforementioned inception from economic concepts, but, during the twentieth century, the sales (market) approach and replacement cost methods were introduced and their use has become widespread since. The income approach to valuation was first proposed in a ground-breaking paper on valuation for taxation purposes by Cochran in 1874 (as cited in Moore, 2009), though the author used “market approach” to describe present value of future benefits. Much later, the first documented book on property valuation by Hurd in 1903 referred to income approach as the only method (as cited in Moore, 2009). This view from an economic standpoint shifted after the Great Depression, where the real estate market suffered severe downturn in prices from reduced demand (Nicholas & Scherbina, 2013). It was then that valuation moved from only a supply and demand perspective to cost approaches earlier proposed by Pollock and Scholz in 1926 (as cited in Moore, 2009), more widely referred to as summation or replacement cost approaches today, and later the sales comparison approaches by Mertzke in 1927 (as

cited in Moore, 2009). Recognition for the use of all three methods and reconciliations of value indications from each model was first encouraged in training manuals published by the Appraisal Institute in 1938 (Moore, 2009).

After the initial phase of approaches being formalised with the advent of the three main valuation methods of today, attention shifted to regulating the field with the changing course of world events. National and global crises exposed variations in valuation practices between different valuers in the same countries, which had major implications on property markets. Gilbertson and Preston (2005) stated that most national market and property crises “exposed wide variations in valuation approaches that often led to vastly different or even unrealistic estimates of similar assets and potentially fraudulent, dishonest or incompetent conduct whereby valuers were not properly trained or regulated” (p. 124). They further stated that “the concern to avoid such collapses led to the emergence of valuation standards firstly on national levels, and then progressed to international levels” (Gilbertson & Preston, 2005, p. 124). Evidence of objectives to regulate, standardise, and instil ethics in the field dates back to early 1930s with the formation of the Appraisal Institute in the United States of America in 1932 (Appraisal Institute, 2014) and the International Association of Assessing Officers (IAAO) in 1934 (International Association of Assessing Officers, 2013). The Appraisal Institute’s objectives to date are to advance professionalism and ethics, global standards, and valuation methodologies for its members (Appraisal Institute, 2013). Similarly, the IAAO strives towards training and educating assessment professionals (International Association of Assessing Officers, 2013). Australian and New Zealand valuers are regulated by joint standards published by the API and PINZ. New Zealand first published its valuation standards for practicing valuers in the country in 1985 (New Zealand Institute of Valuers, 1995) and now publishes joint standards with the Australian Property Institute due to the similarity in valuation practices and markets in these countries (Australian Property Institute, 2012). In the UK, valuers follow the RICS Red Book on valuation standards, though this has wider global acceptance outside the UK (Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, 2014).

Most international standards had been brought about through the recognition of the need for ensuring consistent valuation standards and procedures across borders. The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, founded in 1792 (Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, 2014), first published its appraisal and valuation manual in 1976, in response to the United Kingdom property crash in the 1970s (Gilbertson & Preston, 2005). It is today widely referred to as the RICS Red Book and incorporates the IVS (Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, 2014). Additionally, the

International Valuation Standards Council was founded in 1981 under the banner of “International Asset Valuation Standards Committee”. It was later renamed to International Valuation Standards Council in 2008, though member countries had started to be included from late 1990s (International Valuation Standards Council, 2020). The International Valuation Standards published by the IVSC is now widely accepted as the forefront of convergence towards consistent global valuation practice standards. The reason for such standardisation is owed to the demand for consistent and transparent valuations as well as to avoid valuation induced finance or property market crises in the future (Gilbertson & Preston, 2005).

The International Valuation Standards is the most common framework of valuation standards adopted by many countries. It has over 140 institutional members operating in over 150 member countries, making it the most widely followed valuation standard in the world (International Valuation Standards Council, 2020). This is followed by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors Valuation - Professional Standards (Red Book), which fully adopts the IVS and is used in the United Kingdom and member countries (Hemphill et al., 2014). These standards contain key terms upon which the bases for valuation practices are formed. These terms are globally understood and provide guidance to valuers with the objectives of providing confidence to the users of valuation reports.

A review of the evolution of property valuation standards as outlined above highlights that the initiation and design of these standards are generally driven by larger developed countries that have better data infrastructure and technical expertise. As has been well documented in the valuation literature, the process of deriving property value is not pure science (Warren-Myers, 2016), but is influenced by factors such as valuer’s knowledge and experience (Babawale & Omirin, 2012; Ayedun et al., 2012), client influence (Levy & Schuck, 1999; Levy & Schuck, 2005; Kucharska-Stasiak, 2013; Wilkens, 2015) and availability and accuracy of market data (Havard, 2001; Ajibola & Ogungbemi, 2011; Babawale & Omirin, 2012; Aliyu et al., 2014). Therefore, it is argued that valuation outcomes are always exposed to uncertainties and errors in human judgement. This leads to the question of whether the International Valuation Standards designed in larger developed countries could be successfully implemented in smaller nations where the number of registered valuers and properties changing hands is far less. So, as outlined below, this paper examines property valuation practices in Fiji.

Property Valuation in Fiji

In Fiji, most rules of law and governing procedures have been adopted from

neighbouring countries Australia and New Zealand. This is largely due to geographical proximity and similarity in historical governance during the Colonial era (Lal, 1992). Much of the older legislation governing real estate are to do with statutory rating valuation purposes, namely the Local Government Act 1972 that to date requires properties to be valued on an Unimproved Capital Value method (Hassan, 2001). The task of administration and regulation of valuation for non-statutory purposes is entrusted with the Valuers Registration Act of 1986 (ACT No. 7 of 1986, 1986).

Collectively, four key institutions are directly involved in the administration of valuation for real estates in Fiji. These institutions include the Valuers Registration Board (VRB), Department of Lands and Surveys under the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources, the Fiji Institute of Valuation and Estate Management, and the School of Land Management and Development at the University of the South Pacific (Narayan, 2002).

The Valuers Registration Act of 1986 provides criteria for the registration of valuers and requirements for the functioning of the Valuers Registration Board. It sets fees and training requirements for graduate valuers for the process of qualifying as registered valuers.

The Fiji Institute of Valuation and Estate Management (FIVEM) was advocated to promote the general interest of the profession (Fiji Institute of Valuation and Estate Management, 2014). Despite having no legal authority to implement or enforce any regulations, the Institute undertakes professional development activities for members of the valuation and estate management fraternity. Calls were made by members for introduction of valuation standards to promote consistency in practices, adopt internationally recognised building measurement standards, and introduce mandatory, continued professional development programs for registered valuers to maintain a level of learning and competence (Myers, 2013). In its Special General Meeting 2015, the Institute obtained majority votes from its members to adopt the IVS as a good practice, with plans to implement the change from 1st January 2016. Since then, FIVEM had organised a technical workshop on IVS for members in October 2016. However, it has not undertaken further activities to promote use of IVS, and lacks authority to implement the IVS or any regulations.

The Department of Lands and Surveys facilitates the management and development of land resources in Fiji. Its Valuation Department is in authority for acquisitions of land for public purposes, assessments, and reassessments of rental on state leases, verification of rental on Crown land, and serves as the official valuers for towns and

cities for reassessments of property rates. One of its key functions is to provide land sales data for the whole country, which is used as a basis for property valuations by government and private valuers in the absence of publicly accessible sales information databases (Department of Lands, 2013).

The University of the South Pacific's School of Land Management and Development, whose main campus is in Suva, Fiji, offers courses in valuation that act as prerequisites for graduates willing to attain registration under the Valuers Registration Act, 1986 (The University of the South Pacific, 2014).

All in all, these institutions are tasked with the administration of valuation practices in Fiji. In particular, the VRB is tasked with controlling valuers' registrations and on-going monitoring of performances. However, no evidence of valuation standards to regulate practices were found until the adoption of the IVS at the FIVEM Special General Meeting 2015. Furthermore, apart from Hassan (2001), and Narayan (2002), who studied unimproved capital value rating systems, no research other than earlier versions of this paper has been conducted in Fiji on valuation practices, or efforts towards standardisation that could guide the implementation of IVS.¹ Hence, the aim of this study is to start the conversation around implementation of IVS in Fiji, by focusing particularly on the issues faced by property valuers.

Methods

The constructive nature of the research required the researcher to obtain deeper understandings of valuation practices in Fiji. Hence, a mixed method approach (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005) was adopted utilising both qualitative and quantitative research methods to obtain a holistic view of valuation practices in Fiji. The use of this approach is further justified due to the inclusion of qualitative and quantitative nature of data across different phases of the valuation research process (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Three data collection methods were used in this study: case studies, structured interviews, and a questionnaire, as described below.

Case Studies

A case study is a "detailed examination of a single person, group, institution, social

¹ Earlier versions of this paper titled "Issues Facing Standardisation of Property Valuation Practices: A Case Study of Suva, Fiji" were peer-reviewed and presented by the primary author at the World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty in 2017 and the Pacific Rim Real Estate Society Conference in 2018.

movement, or event” whereby the researcher can become a participant-observer to record actual activities performed over a duration of time (Thomas & Brubaker, 2008, p. 114). Case studies are extensions of qualitative data collection methods, which allow for in-depth study of people, groups, an industry, or an organisation (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2014). In this research, the case studies were used to narrow the scope of the study to gain in-depth understanding of valuation practices. A multi-case method was used where the cases selected would assist the researcher in deriving real-life valuation practices in Fiji (Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2002).

Over the duration of this research, the researcher was allowed to observe the valuation practices and reports of three well-known valuation firms, which were on the panel of all major lending institutions in Fiji. Valuation projects observed within the three case firms were selected using purposive sampling whereby the researcher opted to be involved in valuation instructions relating to market valuations for residential properties in Suva. This allowed the researcher to observe valuation practices attributed specifically to such instructions. Case studies were conducted over a duration of six months. It is noted that in Fiji there are only a small number of valuation firms operating, and an even smaller number of firms that are approved on the panels of all major banks operating in the country. Further limitations faced due to indemnity insurance covers and concerns over information security restricted access to more firms for the case study. Nonetheless, observing practices of the three selected firms, which are amongst the most well-known, provided the researcher valuable insights into valuation practices in Fiji and on the implementation of IVS.

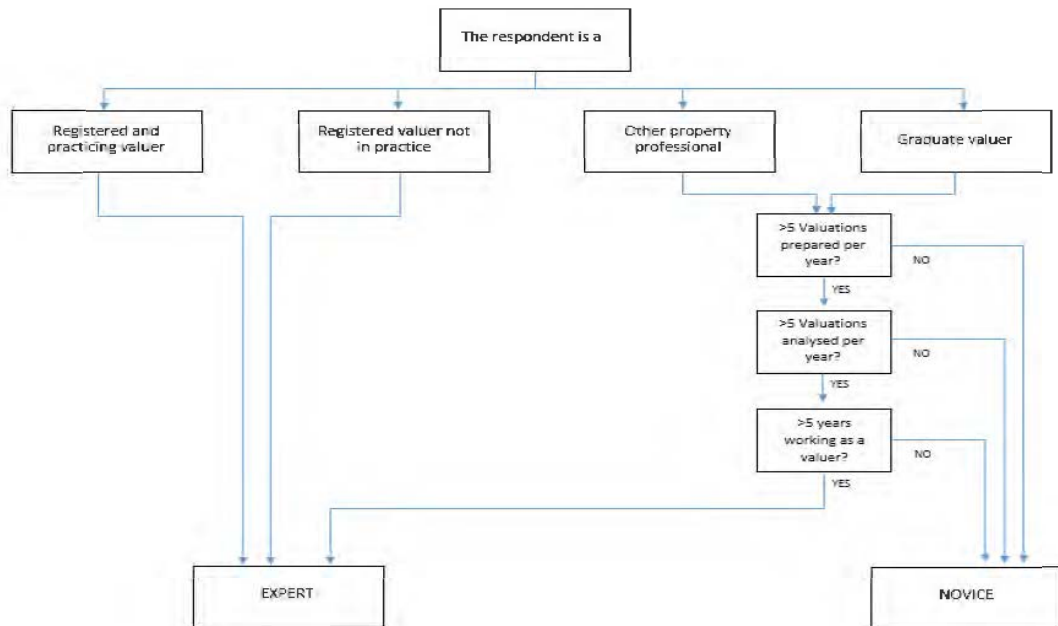
Questionnaires

Questionnaires provided easier access to a larger audience of valuers based in Fiji. The population of interest were registered valuers, or graduate valuers with enough experience to provide insights into valuation practices in Fiji. Registered valuers were individuals with relevant qualifications in the field of property with a minimum of two years’ experience in valuation and who had satisfied the requirements to be qualified as registered valuers under the requirements of the VRB (ACT No. 7 of 1986, 1986).

While selecting a sampling frame for graduate valuers was not feasible due to lack of information on the number of graduates working as valuers, the sampling frame for registered valuers was selected from the list of registered valuers approved by the VRB and published in the Government of Fiji gazette (Fiji Government, 2014). From the 74 registered valuers identified, probability sampling technique of systematic sampling (Thomas & Brubaker, 2008) was identified to screen registered valuers

who were located in Fiji and still practicing as valuers. It was found that 31 registered valuers were either based, or had at least one branch, in Suva. Registered valuers were then contacted to identify the number of graduate valuers working in their firms and to confirm their willingness to participate in the research by filling out questionnaires. In addition to the 31 registered valuers, eight graduate valuers screened to be with sufficient experience to qualify for participation in this research were identified as per the selection criteria demonstrated in Figure 1.²

Figure 1. Selection Criteria Used for Classification as Expert vs. Novice Valuers.



Source: Author

In-depth Interviews

The complexity of the issues, ranging from valuation methods and techniques, to valuation standards meant the researcher had to rely on more in-depth information than those obtained through questionnaires and case studies. Interviews are considered the best source of information collection where information is complex and not easily obtained from quantitative methods (Ghuri & Gronhaug, 2002). The information sought from structured interviews were to clarify valuation practices not detailed enough in questionnaires, or to understand the logic behind certain practices

² 28 responses were received out of the 39 questionnaires distributed. Some respondents did not answer all questions provided in the questionnaire. The number of responses for questions posed are specified in the results section.

noted during case studies. Furthermore, interviews provided understanding on the status of valuations with regards to valuation standards and information sources. Implications of any issues identified, and potential solutions were also discussed.

Purposive sampling was applied in that interview participants and case studies were selected using the researcher's judgement on the most relevant persons and cases for the research (Cavana, 2001). The researcher selected four senior members from the four key institutions involved in administration of valuation in Fiji, including an executive member of FIVEM, senior member of the Department of Lands Valuation Division, senior member of the Real Estate Agents Licensing Board, and board member of the Valuers Registration Board. Three of the four members were registered valuers, but all participants chose to remain anonymous.

Results

The research methods were aimed to better understand the current status of valuations in Fiji and the challenges in implementing the IVS. Early observations of the case studies identified three, broad issues: inconsistency in application of IVS reporting standards (institutional issues), challenges of availability and reliability of data (informational issues), and inconsistency in application of valuation methodology (technical issues). Hence, further investigations via interviews and the questionnaire focussed on these broad topics. The results from the research are presented below.

Inconsistency in Application of IVS in Reporting

The IVS General Standards 103 on reporting sets out the minimum information that must be communicated in a valuation report to the intended user (International Valuation Standards Council, 2017). Although the IVS recognises that the purpose of valuation will ultimately determine the level of details and complexity of individual reports, IVS 103 sets out the minimum that must be reported to communicate the scope of the valuation assignment.

Using data collected during case studies, the researcher identified numerous variances in the report contents of the three firms that were the subjects in the case studies. The results are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Minimum Report Contents Covered in Contrast to IVS 103.

IVS	FIRM 1	FIRM 2	FIRM 3
General Standards – IVS 103 Reporting	Case Studies	Anonymous	Anonymous
Identification and status of the valuer			
Identification of the client and any other intended users			
Purpose of the valuation	✓	✓	✓
Identification of the asset to be valued	✓	✓	✓
Basis of value	✓	✓	✓
Valuation date	✓	✓	✓
Extent of investigation	✓	✓	
Nature and source of information relied upon	✓	✓	✓
Assumptions and special assumptions			
Restrictions on use, distribution or publication		✓	✓
Confirmation that the assignment has been undertaken in accordance with the IVS			
Valuation approach and reasoning	✓	✓	✓
Amount of the valuation or valuations	✓	✓	✓
Date of valuation report	✓	✓	✓

Source: Author

The results clearly indicate that the three well-established firms in the country failed to fully meet the minimum reporting requirements of IVS 103. While certain aspects of the prescribed IVS report contents may not be applicable to Fiji, an overview confirms variances in reporting content between firms.

When asked on possible reasons for such variances, one of the registered valuer interviewees stated:

Most valuations done by private valuers are for mortgage purposes and banks have their own standard of reporting. But if the institute or the [Valuers] Registration Board set a standard valuation report for Fiji which is regulated then all valuers will follow one standard and all stakeholders can expect that one same standard.

Another registered valuer responded by saying that, “half the time we do not know

what the IVS wants. As long as our clients and banks accept our reports, that's fine." A third interviewee, who was a senior staff at the Department of Lands, suggested that without a legal framework or demands for compliance from key stakeholders such as banks, FIVEM had no powers to implement the IVS or any such changes.

The case study findings and reasoning provided by the interview participants suggest a lack of understanding on the requirements of the IVS on the part of valuers and users alike. This could potentially be addressed through further training provided to valuers and stakeholders on the implementation and benefits of the IVS. Additionally, the findings identified the need for legal support to fully implement the IVS, something that the FIVEM lacked, making it unable to fully implement the IVS. Hence, this is an *institutional* challenge that would require significant institutional changes to bring practices in line with IVS requirements.

Data Availability and Reliability

Anecdotal evidence in Fiji and literature suggested the need for availability and reliability of data. IVS 102 on Investigations and Compliance required valuers to consider the credibility and reliability of information, giving consideration to the purpose of valuation.

This issue was observed during case studies and reported by respondents during interviews, and in questionnaires when asked about limitations faced in their practice as valuers. All interview participants and 64% ($n = 28$) of questionnaire respondents highlighted that the unavailability of sales data, market rentals, and construction costs were the key reasons for disparity in valuation assessments. When asked to elaborate, the common responses were that the lack of reliable market data were one of the key challenges that valuers faced that could limit their ability to comply with IVS 102. All four interview participants confirmed that the profession needed market data to raise proficiency and the data available needed to be more detailed to be reliable.

One of the interviewees who was not a registered valuer but was a key figure in the administration of the Real Estate Agents Licensing Board stated that:

Accessibility of data is lacking. Data is not readily available. Delay in releasing of data. Apart from [just] sales, data needs to be further categorised for example which property [was] sold by real estate agents, companies, private sale, etc. Lot of data analysis needs to be done regarding sales for example by cities, divisions [and] areas. Categorise according to zoning for example commercial, industrial

[and] residential. Sales data lacks detail on properties for example no data is given on specifications of property such as size, [number of] bedrooms, etc. Implications [on] valuations as [they] do not get actual details.

The registered valuer interviewees explained challenges they faced with accessibility of reliable market data. One of the interviewees stated that:

Current data source gives description of property like sale price and age. But we have lot of previous information that we search manually. Then we combine [them] sometimes. Since sales data lacks a lot of information we rely on old valuations for plans, engineers certificate, title, etc. [Otherwise we ask] all details for the [property] owner to provide. Everything is in hard copy.

A registered valuer stated that:

[We] get raw sales data at the moment. It has no description on improvements. Its only when we get to do valuation [on any] particular property then we go out and inspect the property briefly. Not just briefly, it's from the kerb. You can call it kerbside inspections. You only see whatever is in the front. But we don't know what is inside because from the road we don't get to see inside.

A member from the Department of Lands, which is the department that currently provides sales data to various stakeholders, stated that:

In Fiji we are provided raw data. Valuers do their own analysis. If three valuers analyse one sale they get different results. So if we can have one central body analysing then valuers [are] going to use one set of analysed data that central body is using. Instead of providing raw data one should be getting analysed data. We have all the data but you have to go to different agencies like [for] sale history you go to titles office, for plans you go to city council [but there is] no central place to get good analysed data. All data is raw. Most valuers don't have time to analyse raw data so they assume a lot of things.

Citing the need for accurate data for accurate valuation assessments, the issue of unavailability of reliable data is classified as an *informational* challenge in the effective implementation of the IVS.

Inconsistency in Application of Valuation Methodology

IVS 105 on Valuation Approaches and Methods lists the Market Approach, Income Approach, and Cost Approach as the three traditional valuation approaches

(International Valuation Standards Council, 2017). Consistent with IVS 105, case studies and structured interviews identified the three approaches to be widely used in Fiji. One of the interview participants reflected this finding and stated that, “we use all three methods [market, income and cost approaches] because it gives you a basis to compare and you’re more comfortable in finalising a value.”

However, the issue identified during research was the application of the valuation methodologies that were sometimes significantly inconsistent between valuers. Although IVS does not specify details on application of the approaches, it is understood that for small island nations with limited market activity, variations in application of methodology between valuers should be managed. One of the interview participants mentioned that “methodology comes from the textbooks, like the sales comparison, summation, income and DCF. In the application of methods, because there are a few assumptions in it, this is where the practice is... where valuers can play around with the practice!”

Questionnaire results and case studies showed large variances in application of methodology. For instance, on the application of the market approach, questionnaire participants were asked about the number of comparable sales they generally analysed. Out of the 17 respondents to this question, six suggested they used five comparable sales (35%), while four suggested they used eight sales (24%). Two suggested using only four sales, while two suggested they used over 10 sales. When asked further on the reasons for using the number of comparable sales, 12 of the 15 respondents (80%) stated it depended on the number of relevant sales data available, while three (20%) stated it depended on if the sales met their judgement of market activity. In contrast, when asked on the basis of making adjustments to sales data, 41% of valuers ($n = 17$) mentioned making adjustments to sales data using their own “intuition” or “previous experience”, while only 18% mentioned they based adjustments on “available market data”. Similarly, when asked about the basis of calculating vacancy and outgoings in the Income Approach, 36% of valuers ($n = 17$) stated using “available market data”, 20% used data provided by clients, 16% relied on past performance of subject property, 12% stated they used a “fixed rate for all properties”, while 8% “estimated” vacancy and outgoings. When using the Cost Approach, participants were asked about the methods of calculating depreciation and sources of building cost data. Of the 17 respondents, 50% used the straight-line method, as this was the prescribed method in most textbooks; however, 23% stated they “estimated” depreciation. On sources of building cost data, respondents yielded six basis of measuring building costs ($n = 17$). Most respondents selected council data (37%) as the main basis of estimating building costs per unit of measurement.

This was followed by Rawlinsons' cost guidelines (23%), and building contractors' costs (17%). Other measures were "estimation of costs" (9%), "own analysis" (9%), and costs from quantity surveyors or architects (6%).

The results confirm much variations in application of the approaches. While the IVS does not dictate on application of approaches, it does outline good practices for valuation of various classes of assets, notably IVS 400 – Real Property Interests. The variation between valuers in application of approaches due to uncertainty and unavailability of reliable data resulted in subjective practices and heuristics. This contradicts the need for objectivity outlined in the IVS Framework, which states "the process of valuation requires the valuer to make impartial judgements as to the reliability of inputs and assumptions. Judgement used in valuation must be applied objectively to avoid biased analyses, opinions and conclusions" (International Valuation Standards Council, 2017). The IVS Framework further suggests the need for appropriate controls and procedures to ensure the necessary degree of objectivity in the valuation process so that results are free from bias. It therefore recommends the IVSC Code of Ethical Principles for Professional Valuers as a framework for professional conduct.

Hence, it is concluded that valuers' practices varied largely when faced with uncertainty such as in the Market and Income Approaches, but valuers displayed uniformity in application of methodology where they were well versed in such as in the calculation of depreciation. It is derived that if valuers are well versed with the principal methodologies cited in the IVS, the variance in application of the methods will be reduced. This calls for further training to be provided to valuers on application of methodologies and IVS, and the need for continuous professional development to deal with these *technical* challenges.

Key Opportunities and Challenges in Implementing the IVS in Fiji

The research obtained in-depth data on how valuers undertook valuation assignments in Fiji, identifying issues hindering the adoption and implementation of IVS. As outlined above, there are three key challenges: Institutional, Informational, and Technical. In the following sub-sections, we discuss some improvement opportunities that may help alleviate these issues and assist with effective implementation of IVS.

Institutional Issues

For a change such as adoption of IVS to be effective, changes need to be made to the

realm of actions, the rules and routines, and the institutions governing the practices (Burns & Scapens, 2000). In the property valuation field, institutions are influenced by organisations like FIVEM and USP. These organisations, similar to other professional bodies in other technical fields such as the Fiji Institute of Accountants, ought to offer more training and guidance to their members and stakeholders, including users of valuation reports such as banks and students. While students are assessed continuously during the course of a program, practicing valuers need to attend training programs provided by relevant organisations such as the Fiji Institute of Valuation and Estate Management or the University of the South Pacific. To make trainings compulsory, these institutions may introduce monitoring systems such as Continued Professional Development (CPD) points and penalise members who fail to meet minimum point requirements.

Key institutions, such as those identified in this paper as directly involved in the administration of valuation in Fiji, may also offer workshops at a fee for industry participants and stakeholders, such as members from banks and insurance companies, on the minimum reporting requirements to expect from their valuation firms. It is understood that users of valuation reports mandate trust and confidence when relying on valuation reports, which is one of the main objectives of the IVS. More awareness of the objectives of IVS for valuers and stakeholders alike will ultimately raise the standard of practice whereby complying firms will become more recognised for a higher standard of reporting over time. This will encourage other firms to improve on compliance.

Additionally, it is recommended that legislative support is sought to empower either of the key institutions identified in Fiji as custodians of the valuation profession to implement IVS. The introduction of CPD requirements is recommended for better collusion between FIVEM and VRB to monitor compliance, which will lead to improvements in the availability of information as well as the technical skills of valuers as discussed below.

Informational Issues

It is noted that due to the unavailability of data, practices relating to heuristics are much prevalent in this field. Such practices undoubtedly have an impact on valuation assessments; therefore, the main objective of the IVS, which is to increase the trust and confidence of users of valuation reports, is not entirely fulfilled. It is suggested that information databases are created for practicing valuers by government organisations in possession of relevant market data. It is envisaged that information databases will also reduce current subjective practices of valuers when selecting and

analysing data. Such databases present an opportunity for the public sector to collect, analyse, and store market data in a usable form that can be accessed for a fee.

Technical Issues

Relevant institutions can offer technical workshops for practicing valuers on the main valuation methodologies. Such workshops will raise the technical skills of valuers. The University of the South Pacific is specifically noted as an institution that may offer short courses to practicing valuers, in addition to its existing valuation courses to students, at a fee. If affiliated with the FIVEM and VRB to count towards members' CPD points, the courses offered by the University will carry an accreditation that will also make its valuation programs and short courses more sought after.

The Valuers Registration Board may consider publishing practice guidelines to assist valuers stay up to date with valuation methodologies.

Table 2 summarises the opportunities and challenges facing the implementation of IVS in Fiji.

All in all, it can be argued that identification of the issues faced in the property valuation field in Fiji presents the opportunity for the valuation field to action changes, especially at the institutional level, that would in turn help deal with the informational and technical issues leading to better implementation of IVS. This in turn would signal better valuation practices.

Table 2. Opportunities and Challenges of Implementing the IVS in Fiji.

Challenges	Institutional	Informational	Technical
Inconsistency in application of IVS in reporting	✓		
Lack of reliable market data		✓	
Inconsistency in application of valuation methodology			✓
Opportunities	Institutional	Informational	Technical
Training to be provided by relevant institutions such as FIVEM, USP and VRB	✓		✓
VRB to publish guidance notes for local valuers	✓		✓
Minimum Continued Professional Development points requirements set by FIVEM to be made compulsory	✓		✓
CPDs offered by FIVEM and USP to be recognised by the Valuers Registration Board	✓		
Educate key stakeholders, including banks, on the minimum requirements of the IVS	✓		
Relevant government agency to be tasked with creating information databases or data registers for ease of storage and access to data		✓	
Government agency may charge subscription fees for access to information databases		✓	
Promote sharing of data between government agencies in possession of essential market data		✓	
Legislative support / authority to one of the key institutions of valuation in Fiji to implement IVS	✓		

Source: Author

Conclusions

The research forms a pioneering study in the field of property valuation in Fiji. It highlights informational, institutional, and technical challenges as well as corresponding opportunities for effective implementation of the International Valuation Standards in Fiji. Though the research has limitations pertaining to the use of interpretative research methodologies and small sample sizes, the use of purposive sampling has ensured that the views of the key stakeholders in the property valuation field in Fiji have been captured, providing confidence in the findings of this study.

The learnings from this study, though based on Fiji, could also be applied to other small Pacific island countries facing similar difficulties with adoption of international standards. Moreover, it is envisaged that this research will trigger further research into how valuations are currently performed in small Pacific island nations, the challenges they face, and how improvements can be made.

Furthermore, a follow-up study could be conducted after a couple of years to ascertain if any of the suggestions or opportunities towards implementation of the IVS were adopted by relevant institutions. Additionally, the number of local valuers who were able to successfully implement the IVS in their reporting can be studied. Future research could also include a comparative study among several Pacific island countries. Similar studies in Samoa and Tonga could reveal similarities and differences in implementing IVS. Subsequently, the use of heuristics by valuers in Fiji and potentially other Pacific island countries due to facing the institutional, information, and technical challenges identified, its impacts on property values and economic sustainability can be studied.

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Suva Residents' Views on Cancer, Diabetes and HIV in The Fiji Times

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Abstract

The burden of preventable diseases is increasing in the South Pacific Island Countries and Territories. In Fiji, significant media attention and national finances are spent on public dissemination of the modifiable risk factors of chronic illnesses. However, little is known about lay societal perceptions of chronic illnesses and of people living with these illnesses. This preliminary study takes an area-situated approach to lay knowledge and examines Suva residents' moral evaluations associated with socially significant health concerns in Fiji. Using the case studies of HIV, cancer, and diabetes, the research employs content analysis to examine 144 Suva residents' Letters to the Editor, published between 2000 and 2019 in *The Fiji Times*. The findings indicate that letter writers on chronic illnesses are power sensitive, interested in governmental responsibility, and aware of the role of stigma in creating inequitable health outcomes. The study's findings locate chronic illness as not only a medical responsibility but also a social justice and human rights concern that requires a multisectoral approach, with community-tailored responses at the heart of all discussions. The lay-societal recognition of the three illnesses as being socially relevant suggests grassroots support for policies directed towards structural reforms for the prevention and management of these illnesses.

Keywords: Public Health; Media Analysis; Diabetes; Cancer; HIV

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Introduction

Lay experiences of illness, wellness, and healing differ geographically due to resource access, and social and cultural dynamics. These experiences, in turn, impact societal explanations of illness causality, illness burden, prevention, treatment, and management. For these reasons, an analysis within situated neighbourhoods is important to gain in-depth understandings of lay knowledge and experiences that inform societal health conceptualisations (Popay et al., 2003). This preliminary study takes an area-situated approach to lay knowledge, through its engagement with cancer, HIV, and diabetes discourse amongst residents living in Suva. The metropolitan city is Fiji's capital and has the country's greatest population density. Given the associated prevalence of cancer, HIV, and diabetes with increased urbanisation, an analysis of Suva residents' understandings of the three illnesses is particularly important for producing public health information that maximises societal uptake.

This study extends research into lay knowledge of health. While previous research has provided in-depth analysis of societal perspectives of illness, wellness, and healing within the Western sociocultural context, less is known about non-Western, and particularly, Pacific people's perspectives on socially prevalent illnesses (Phillips et al., 2018). Moreover, while a small number of studies have begun in Fiji in the area of knowledge assessment, these have focused on the perceptions and practices of people living with the illness (Philips, 2020; Zibrán, & Mohammadnezhad, 2019). This study expands on such research by taking a wider societal lens into lay-societal evaluations of illness' causes and consequences, as well as the efficacy of prevention and management options, and societal responses to people living with chronic illnesses.

Literature Review

Diabetes and cancer are both reported to be leading causes of morbidity and mortality rates in the Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs), including Fiji (Bray et al., 2018; Tervonen et al., 2017). Today, the region has the highest global diabetes prevalence, with an estimated 30 million people living with diabetes. The number is predicted to increase to 55 million by 2025 (Foliaki, & Pearce, 2003). Moreover, Fiji has the highest diabetes-related mortality rates in the world, according to the latest World Life Expectancy Rankings (World Health Organisation, 2018). As is the general global trend, the predominant diabetes form is Type 2 diabetes, which is

considered to be a “lifestyle disease”, in contrast to type 1, which is thought to be a genetic condition. Type 2 diabetes is strongly influenced by lifestyle factors of urbanization, a move away from traditional lifestyles, and a combination of highly refined diet, physical inactivity, genetics, and increasing obesity rates (International Diabetes Federation, 2017). The prevalence of cancer is another significant concern for Fiji. Cervical, liver, and uterine cancers are the most common cancer types in the PICTs, and have elevated levels compared to Pacific people living in New Zealand. For people living in Fiji, the predominant cancer types for males are lymphoid and haemopoietic, prostate, liver, and lung, while for females the predominant cancer types are cervical, breast, uterine, and ovarian (Foliaki et al., 2011).

The presence of Type 2 diabetes and cancer morbidity exacerbates the cycle of poverty and disempowerment of individuals, communities, and nations. As seen in Fiji and other PICTs, diabetes and cancer-related complications place increasing burden on national economies in developing countries. Moreover, diabetes-related medical interventions, such as cholesterol-lowering drugs, are unaffordable for most countries (World Health Organisation, 2005). The individual-level and community-level consequences of diabetes and cancer are amplified due to limited resources and infrastructure to facilitate specialised treatment (Cheng, 2010; Morgan, 2015; Sarfati et al., 2019). For instance, with national budgets already stretched, there is limited opportunity for Fiji government to provide the specialised care needed for the most prevalent consequences of Type 2 diabetes: retinopathy, kidney failure, and foot ulcers (Damato et al., 2014; Kumar et al., 2014; Pablo et al., 2018). The lack of resources creates a downward spiral into further poverty for individuals, communities, and nations. Due to diabetes-related disabilities, individuals cannot work, decreasing the individuals’ and their family’s earning capacities, increasing dependency and marginalisation, thereby lowering quality of life and exacerbating economic poverty and social isolation (Reubi et al., 2016; World Bank, 2012).

In addition to the high rates of cancer and diabetes-related morbidity and mortality, the HIV status of the South Pacific region is also increasing (World Health Organisation, 2019). The region is categorised into three tiers by HIV prevalence: the first tier comprises of Papua New Guinea (PNG), which has the greatest number of cases in the region; this is followed by Fiji, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, and Guam, which collectively form the second tier; other small island countries form the third and last tier, with few known cases of HIV (Commission on AIDS in the Pacific, 2009).

Poor health infrastructure, low national budgets, and, particularly in the case of Fiji, political instability, means that the PICTs are at a crisis point due to the rapid increase in morbidity and mortality rates through chronic illnesses. The region's ability to overcome type 2 diabetes, cancer and HIV mortality is, therefore, not only a medical responsibility but also a social justice responsibility that requires a multisectoral approach, with community-tailored responses at the heart of all discussions (Glasgow & Schrecker, 2015). Hence, an important area of analysis is the lay society's response to these illnesses.

Methodology

Data

Awareness and access to resources can differ by locality and can result in divergent health outcomes. These experiences, in turn, impact social conceptions of illnesses and people living with illnesses. Although geographical prevalence of the illnesses is currently not available from Fiji's Bureau of Census (Chand et al., 2020), these illnesses are associated with increased urbanisation. For these reasons, the paper situates lay knowledge about health within Fiji's greatest metropolitan city through its engagement with Suva residents' discourse on cancer, HIV, and diabetes in *The Fiji Times*' Letters to the Editor.¹ The timeframe was from 1 January, 2000 to 31 December, 2019. This timeframe was specifically chosen because the year 2000 served as a pivotal turning point in Fiji and other PICTs' emphasis on reducing NCDs (Tolley et al., 2016). Moreover, since 2000, HIV surveillance in Fiji acquired greater significance with a jump in the number of diagnosed cases (UNAIDS report, 2014). Having an almost 10-year timeframe provides an exploration of how health policies have been implemented. Using "diabetes", "HIV or AIDS", and "cancer" as individual search terms, we found 86 letters referencing "HIV or AIDS", 68 referencing "cancer," and 38 referencing "diabetes." Articles that fell outside our criteria were duplicates within the newspaper, or articles that mentioned diabetes, HIV, or cancer only in passing. 48 articles were discarded for one or more of these reasons, and 144 articles met the selection criteria and were included in the study: 65 for HIV, 50 for cancer, and 29 for diabetes.

¹ The data from Fiji's other major daily *The Fiji Sun* was not accessible through its archives at the time the research was conducted, hence the data for this study is from *The Fiji Times*. *The Fiji Times* database resource is limited to 2004 until 2010 and manual searches through physical newspapers were necessary to access data outside this timeframe.

Method

The study implemented content analysis, a qualitative research method used to understand how meaning is created and expressed in context-specific situations in society. Given the limited information on societal perceptions of HIV, cancer, and diabetes within the South Pacific region, an inductive approach is taken in this study, whereby the analytical categories/themes are derived from the data (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008, pp. 108-109). The research implemented the three-phase methodological approach developed by Gounder and Ameer (2018), and modified the codes to the requirements of this study. The researcher and research assistant conducted the research in three consecutive phases of content analysis.

Phase 1 was the development of the following variables: “Illness type”, and “year of publication”. The researcher and research assistant read and classified the articles according to the first variable of “Illness type”. Article discussions fell into one of the following categories: “HIV”, “Diabetes”, or “Cancer”. We further classified articles by the year of publication. Phase 2 implemented a process of open coding using the qualitative analytical software MAXQDA. Both the researcher and the research assistant independently read the letters and noted themes as they occurred in the data, rather than using preconceived categories. The letters were analysed for manifest and latent thematic content. The manifest content was portions of the text (words, phrases, or sentences), while the latent content involved the interpretation of the underlying meaning of the text (theme) (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004, p. 106; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, pp. 1279-1281). Words, sentences, or paragraphs related to manifest and latent themes were highlighted. The highlighted sections were then labelled. We constructed culturally situated thematic labels, comprised of metaphors, arguments, presence of characters, sources of information, and images that indicated value judgements associated with illnesses and people living with illnesses. Once the researcher and research assistant had exhausted all possible themes within the cohort of Letters to the Editor, the labels were then consolidated into categories expressing commonality of an overarching theme. Each category was then given a code to reflect the thematic domain of that code. Using the information, we developed the coding sheet (see Figure 1). In Phase 3, the coding sheet was applied by the researcher and research assistant to each letter. The codes were first checked for presence. The codes were further analysed for aspects of the theme (code categories).

Figure 1. Coding Sheet.

Codes	Code descriptors	Code categories
Metaphor	The cross-domain mapping which involves borrowing one set of concepts to visualise another.	The occurrence of metaphors to describe the illness
Disease-to-person ratio	What is the locus of the disease	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the disease affect a portion of the person or 2. Does the disease affect the whole person
Responsibility attribution	The agency associated with aspects of the illness	<p>Who is held responsible for the illness's:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. cause 2. prevention 3. treatment 4. management
Cause	Ways in which the illness occurs	<p>Is the causal reference weighted towards:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Medical causes 2. Societal causes 3. Behavioural causes
Burden of the illness	Why the illness is a problem and for whom	<p>What are the impacts of the illness on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. people living with the illness 2. on the levels of society: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) family b) community c) national d) regional e) global
Solution: Prevention	Interventions to avoid the illness	<p>Is the prevention of the illness weighted towards interventions that are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. medical 2. cultural 3. societal 4. behavioural
Solution: Treatment	Interventions to cure the illness	<p>Is the treatment of the illness weighted towards interventions that are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. medical 2. cultural 3. societal 4. behavioural
Solution: Management	Interventions to ensure quality of life for people living with the illness	<p>Is the management of the illness weighted towards interventions that are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. medical 2. cultural 3. societal 4. behavioural
People living with illness	The reference to people living with the illness	<p>Is the reference oriented towards:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agent-mode 2. Victim-mode 3. Medical-mode 4. Other <p>Is the reference empowering or disempowering people living with the illness?</p>
Overall tone	An evaluation of the above points to determine how lay society orients discussion around the illness	<p>Is the tone overall:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. optimistic 2. pessimistic 3. moralistic 4. neutral

Limitations

Letters to the editor have been found to be one of the most read sections of a newspaper (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2002). At the same time, letters to the editor have a contested presence in the media landscape: they are non-journalistic opinion pieces, which provide a site for public participation in “debates about current affairs” and the section, thus, provides a public space with the potential “for a more deliberative form of democracy” (Young, 2013, p. 3). Those who write letters to the editor tend to be non-professional members of society who have strong viewpoints about controversial topics. A limitation of such letters is that while this is one indication of public views, it is not a random sample of community perspectives and may or may not be representative of wider societal understandings. However, such discourses provide an important site of engagement with societal viewpoints, which may not align with mainstream discourses but which are nevertheless given prominence and legitimacy through their publication (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2002).

Results and Discussion

This preliminary study engages with lay knowledge on three chronic illnesses: cancer, HIV, and diabetes. Lay discourse on health is a representation of the accumulated societal and cultural norms developed over time, creating a mental schema on how to respond to illnesses. Such discussions, grounded in the sociocultural context within which people live, offer an important insight into the situated understandings and subjective experiences of illness causality, the manifestations of illnesses, and the efficacy of prevention and treatment options (Putland et al., 2011). As seen below, the study found a greater similarity between the depictions of cancer and HIV than diabetes, through metaphor use, illness-to-person ratio, and the overtones in discussions.

Metaphors

Metaphors are linguistic expressions that engage with the social and cultural beliefs about illness and provide insight into how illnesses are understood in terms of causality, prevention, and management (Wallis & Nerlich, 2005, p. 2629). Metaphors allow people to create a visual image of an illness, which is situated within “the framework of lived experiences” (Penson et al., 2004, p. 713). However, research has identified that ingrained and unquestioned, negative metaphor usage adversely impacts people living with illnesses in several sociocultural domains, including the outcomes of court cases, such as those involving people living with HIV (Drass et al., 1997; Rollins,

2002). This study found three prevalent classifications of illness metaphors. These were war or militaristic metaphors, which referred to the eradication of the disease; the assassin metaphor, which referred to a singular entity that is a killer; and the plague or scourge metaphor, which referred to the illness as a severe affliction. Examples are seen below:

Table 1. Metaphors Used to Describe Diseases.

Militaristic metaphors	Assassin metaphor	Plague/scourge metaphor
Silently fighting renal cancer Battle of all battles	Ferocious monster Grim reaper AIDS is a killer Sword dangling over our heads	Tidal wave Dreaded disease Dreaded scourge

The study found a high usage of militaristic metaphors weighted towards the eradication of illnesses. Further analysis reveals that, for cancer, the battle is at the individual level (“silently fighting renal cancer”), while for HIV, it is at the societal level (“Battle of all battles”) and HIV is depicted as an enemy of the collective society.

A raft of research has identified issues with the use of metaphors in illness-related discourse. Of particular concern is the militaristic metaphor, which permeates the discourses of cancer and HIV. While on one hand, the militaristic metaphor serves to galvanize a nation into fighting a common enemy (Nerlich et al., 2002), the use of militaristic metaphors such as “fighting cancer” and “battling HIV” is deemed problematic because there is an associated responsibility that the person who has the chronic illness is now responsible for “overcoming” the illness. Hence, when a chronic illness progresses, there are feelings of fear, guilt, personal failure, and shame due to the high levels of associated personal responsibility in “combating and overcoming” the illness (Sontag, 1990).

Another prevalent metaphor that is believed to have negative connotations is the plague or scourge metaphor, which was found in this study in reference to HIV. As seen in our study, the metaphor is associated with religious and moralistic discourse. The discourse is correlated with petitions for condemnation and social banishment of people living with HIV, and the prohibition of others from participating in socially immoral sexual behaviours (Sherwin, 2001). The metaphor extends to censoring people living with HIV who have children, as wilfully spreading the plague or

scourge of HIV.

Illness-to-person Ratio

The study found death to be a common theme in cancer and HIV discussions. Diabetes had a different ratio to cancer and HIV, with diabetes having an impact at the individual level on specific areas of a person's body; however, the locus of impact could differ (e.g., kidney failure versus amputation of leg). When the illness-to-person ratio was analysed for people living with cancer and HIV, the study found both illnesses to have “whole person” effects. For cancer, there was a lack of engagement with people's lived experiences with cancer. Thus, cancer was presented as a “losing battle”, and persons with cancer depicted as fatal victims of the illness. For example, one letter writer said, “My brother lost his wife and mother of five children to breast cancer on Valentine's Day. He commented that this year's Valentine's Day would be unforgettable” (*The Fiji Times* Letters to the Editor, “Valentine's Day”, 2008). Research findings indicate that people have a fearful and fatalistic attitude towards cancer, and, in fact, cancer is reported to be the most feared disease in society (Williamson et al., 2011). The prominence of death and fear in societal discourse on cancer can also be associated with the lack of knowledge of preventing cancer, and also the personal and immediate societal burdens of cancer (Keeney et al., 2010; Vrinten et al., 2017).

HIV was similarly depicted as a losing battle for individuals with HIV when written by the lay population. A high reference to death, as seen in the cases of cancer and HIV, comes at the expense of discussions on the prevention and management of an illness. Also, a high mention of death implies that there is “no life” after diagnosis. In recognition of these societal perceptions, letters written from the perspective of people with the subjective experience of living with the illness is evident for HIV. Advocates wrote about their public declaration of being HIV positive as an outreach to put a “human face” to HIV. For example, one person wrote:

I went public about my HIV status so that people can put a human face to HIV and be convinced that one can look as healthy as I do but be infected. The reason is to treat everyone as HIV-positive and make responsible decisions about sex as Doctor Jiko Luveni continues to emphasise. For those of us who are infected, we can only take drugs so that in our own way we can continue to contribute to national development and the welfare of our families and at the same time stop the spread of HIV. The purpose of my campaign is to save lives and the taxpayer's money. (*The Fiji Times* Letters to the Editor, “AIDs dilemma”, 2005)

Similar advocating was not found in letters about diabetes or cancer.

Burden of Illness

Another consideration of the study was on who bears the burden of an illness. The study found that the burden of the illness was similar for cancer and HIV, but that both differed from diabetes. The most referenced burden of cancer and HIV was the societal impact. On the other hand, for diabetes the impact most referenced was on the individual who suffered the side-effects of poorly-managed diabetes, despite evidence showing diabetes' profound effects on the family (Rajaram, 1997) and the wider socio-economic fabric of society (Cheng, 2010; Morgan, 2015). The societal level at which the burden was borne differed between cancer and HIV. For cancer, the emphasis was on the immediate social sphere, where individuals had to cope with the emotional burden of the death of a person with cancer. These individuals and families were portrayed as isolated in their grief from the rest of society. For HIV, the impact was at the macro-societal level, as the emphasis was on the decimation of small island nation populations.

A common theme across the three illnesses was the burden on the national economy. The emphasis on how this burden on the national economy occurs differed by illness. For cancer, it was due to the progression of the illness and the loss in productivity. As cancer progresses, it impinges on a person's ability to work, until the illness's final manifestation. As one person said, "It is a sad loss to the newspaper industry because gone is a man who stood only for the best quality work" (*The Fiji Times* Letters to the Editor, "Moce Magnus", 2010). For diabetes the burden on the national economy was due to the increased rates of amputation and resultant loss in productivity. For HIV, the burden on the national economy was due to a shrinking population through HIV-related mortality rates.

Cause, Solution, and Responsibility Attribution

The study found that knowledge about causal factors and solutions matched each other. For illnesses such as cancer, where the causal factors were not well understood, the solutions were also vague. A few articles briefly mentioned specific cancer types and associated them to specific causes. For instance, lung cancer was attributed to the soot emitted from the sugar mills, while the use of oral contraception was linked to increased risks in breast cancer. However, most discussions of cancer were generic, with a wide range of causes attributed to generalised cancer

occurrence. Cancer causes ranged from “mysterious” causes, to air pollution, such as through smoking and car emissions. As one person noted, “tobacco use has been proven to cause cancer and numerous other serious illnesses” (*The Fiji Times Letters to the Editor*, “Smoke in our face”, 2005).

In relation to the lack of knowledge and certainty about cause, the only discussion of prevention was a change in societal behaviour towards a Biblically proscribed pattern of living. For example, one letter said that:

Living a healthy life style by following the simple eight laws of health will not only prolong life but also reduce the cancer statistics. Our body needs proper nutrition. We need to return to Eden by eating more grains, nuts, fruits and vegetables. Lean meats can be included if needed. Exercise is a must for all. Drink about two litres of water daily. Get out in the sun. Temperance is important as too much of any good thing is bad for the health. Breath(e) deeply and fill your lungs with fresh air. Rest is important. Sleep for at least six to eight hours daily. Finally, trust in God. He alone can give us the will and strength to break those lifestyle habits which have imprisoned us. Whatever health problems we have is the direct result of breaking one or more of God s health laws listed above. (*The Fiji Times Letters to the Editor*, “Healthy living”, 2006)

Treatment of cancer was not discussed nor was there any mention of medical checks for early detection of cancer forms.

HIV causes were expressed at both societal and individual levels. Causes referenced indicated wider, societal-level issues that were deemed as exacerbating the increase in HIV. Blame for increasing HIV rates was attributed to “lack of vision and leadership”, “non-consensual sex”, and increasing rates of prostitution. Individual-level sexual attitudes were also associated with increases in HIV. Laxity and a lack of responsibility in sexual behaviour, as well as promiscuity, were cited as exacerbating HIV. HIV-related information and societal uptake of this information was a central theme. There was concern about the lack of societal knowledge about HIV causes, on the one hand, due to the societal attitude towards HIV as a taboo subject, while on the other hand, people were blamed for not connecting with the information that was so widely available.

Prevention references corresponded to causal references. The promotion of HIV literacy for HIV prevention was highly advocated. Monogamy, condom use, abstinence, and improved morality were all highly referenced preventative themes at the individual level. The role of religious leaders as advocates was identified as

instrumental in the prevention of HIV. Letters appealed to religious leaders to support condom use. Another recommendation was to discuss HIV with congregations, thus decreasing knowledge barriers. A more extreme societal measure advocated was the segregation of people living with HIV for the protection of the rest of society. Authors argued that the rights of society need to be considered before the rights of those with HIV. Early detection through HIV testing was highly recommended. ARV use was recommended by HIV advocates, while faith-healing and traditional medicinal use were raised as treatment measures by members of the general population.

For type 2 diabetes, with known causal factors associated with lifestyle, there were more concrete discussions about causes and solutions. The rapid increase in diabetes was attributed to social influences in the form of fast-food and junk food advertisements, and manufacturers' practices of promoting high sugar and high-fat products. Diabetes was also presented as a social justice issue of inequitable resource access. As seen in the following example, diabetes was portrayed as the inevitable consequence of poverty and the high price of healthy food, leading to reduced access to quality food:

The prevention of diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure and obesity depends on a healthy diet. We all know that. The question is, who can afford a healthy diet? The answer is expatriates, professionals, the upper echelons of the public service and ministerial fat-cats. The rest have to make do with tinned fish (in oil, with salt added)-canned bully beef containing globs of fat (and added salt) ... But our government continues to levy huge import duties on healthy foods that enter this country- foods which the average wage earner down to squatter families have no hope of affording. (*The Fiji Times* Letters to the Editor, "Food day", 2005)

The government was attributed responsibility for reduction and management of diabetes: suggestions involved moving the health promotion efforts, such as the establishment of fitness centres, out of the capital to regional areas. Another call established a flow-on effect of government actions to people's actions, for the betterment of society.

What people understand about causal factors behind an illness will influence the actions taken to prevent and/or mitigate the risks of an illness' occurrence. For cancer, causal ambiguity and a fatalistic perspective influenced people's personal abilities and inclination to take risk-reducing behaviours (Han et al., 2007). This is in contrast to diabetes, with its association with lifestyle factors, where more concrete

steps are provided to prevent diabetes (Gounder & Ameer, 2018). HIV is an illness that challenges societal norms about what can be said in public, and this societal attitude has, until recently, been a barrier to HIV information uptake.

Furthermore, perceptions about causal responsibility influence who is held responsible for fixing the problem. For instance, a well-demonstrated relationship is the media's use of episodic versus thematic framing and the audience's corresponding attribution of responsibility for who should fix the problem (Iyengar, 1990). While the episodic frame discusses an issue in terms of individuals' experiences, the thematic frame discusses the same issue as a societal concern. Using poverty as an example, Iyengar demonstrated that the two frames elicit different audience responses: the episodic frame results in greater blame towards individuals for causing their poverty, while the thematic frame elicits more support for government policies to reduce societal poverty. The findings also hold for media representations of health issues (Niederdeppe et al., 2014). Responsibility attribution is associated with causal knowledge. Hence, responsibility attribution is not seen in cancer discussions due to the lack of concrete knowledge about the causal factors. On the other hand, diabetes and HIV use both episodic and thematic frames in discussing causality, and letter writers provide both individual and societal recommendations to reduce illness occurrence.

People Living with the Illness

The study found that when people living with an illness are a prevalent topic, there is also a high reference to stigma. Hence, stigma was a central topic in discussions about diabetes and HIV (as the letters' emphasis was on people living with the illness), but not apparent for letters on cancer (which did not discuss people living with cancer). The stigma faced by people living with diabetes and HIV, particularly by medical professionals when seeking medical attention, was highlighted. The letters were written from the perspective of people not personally living with diabetes or HIV, but by bystanders, whose letters can be read as 'witness statements'. For example:

HIV patients are forced to wait although they arrive early. Why are we doing this to our beloved sisters and brothers? They deserve equal rights and I hope the whole nation will stop criticising them. Treat them like the way you treat your loved ones at home. They still belong to our community. Give them equal rights. (*The Fiji Times* Letters to the Editor, "Equal treatment", 2004)

In the case of diabetes, the patients' fears of the nurses' anger led to a reluctance to ask questions, thus engendering situations of personal knowledge gap in diabetes management and treatment. For example:

I...was astounded by the way patients were being treated by nurses during blood pressure and diabetes checks. One nurse, in particular, was calling names to old women who came for their regular checks. The nurse told a 90-year-old she was "selfish" because she wanted to have her pressure taken again. She was rudely told to return at a later date...What angered me most was that I realised the elderly women were reluctant to ask any question about their health because they were scared of the nurses growling. (*The Fiji Times* Letters to the Editor, "Rude Nurse", 2008.)

In chronic illnesses, such as type 2 diabetes and HIV, an important criterion for ensuring fewer hospital referrals is to empower individuals to become self-confident in their abilities to successfully manage their conditions on a day-to-day basis (Hörnsten et al., 2004; Okoror et al., 2014). As nurses play a significant face-to-face role in providing health-related information, they are critical in helping patients to successfully manage their conditions (Stiles, 2011, p. 37). Hence, the maintenance of a positive nurse-patient relationship is crucial.

Healthcare providers' stigmatised viewpoints towards people living with an illness are correlated with clinical behaviour towards patients with these illnesses, as seen in the healthcare providers' communication, which is less patient-centred towards people living with the illness. Other evidence of negative attitudes on the part of healthcare professionals that is reported to be widespread in the developing world is the nurses' verbal and physical abuse of patients within a clinical setting (Jewkes et al., 1998). Healthcare provision, which includes nurses' negative attitudes towards individuals illnesses, has considerable influence on people living with the illness by causing them to feel "disrespected, inadequate or unwelcome, thus negatively affecting the encounter quality and their willingness to seek needed care" (Phelan et al., 2015, p. 320). These embodied feelings of stigma, in turn, create stress, a higher risk of non-adherence to medical treatment, mistrust of health professionals, avoidance of healthcare personnel, and poorer health outcomes (Browne et al., 2013, p. 6).

Overall Tone

The overall tone of the discussions was assessed by taking into consideration the specificity of discussions of cause, solution, and the portrayal of people living with

an illness. For cancer, the discussion was uncertain and pessimistic in relation to ambivalence in causal knowledge, which is correlated with a lack of solution knowledge. The only discussion of cure is a change in behaviour to a proscribed, Biblical pattern of living through diet, exercise, and rest (see letter, “Healthy living”, above). Due to the lack of a cure for HIV, which was highly associated with a behavioural cause, the overall tone for HIV was pessimistic with moral overtones. Prevention-oriented discussions had a high moral overtone, arguing for promotion of abstinence, monogamy, and morality to reduce the incidence of HIV in the society. There was also a lack of engagement in the letters with medical advancements in HIV. Moreover, with a lack of cure, there was considerable emphasis on highlighting prevention. Diabetes, which was perceived as preventable, had an optimistic but antagonistic overtone. Letter writers appeared to express an opinion that diabetes was avoidable and the increasing national diabetes rate was due to a lack of effort on the part of the relevant responsibility attributors. There were concrete suggestions for all levels of society to prevent further diabetes occurrence.

Recommendations

The study’s findings locate chronic illness as a social justice and human rights concern. The findings indicate the different societal domains in which stigma can and does occur in Fiji, and particularly, Suva. For diabetes and HIV, the stigmatised response of health professionals was emphasised. It is heartening that lay society acknowledges and condemns stigmatised behaviour within the medical domain towards patients. Moreover, within the lay knowledge, there is recognition of the detrimental effect medical personnel’s stigma can have on personal management of illnesses. However, there was also the stigmatised discussions within the Letters to the Editor towards people living with HIV, through blame for spreading HIV. Ongoing efforts are needed to further counter the stigma within the medical and lay society towards people living with HIV and diabetes. Another concern with the representation of people living with illness was the lack of engagement with people’s lived experiences of cancer. The discourse is instead weighted towards a fatalistic portrayal of cancer through metaphor usage and emphasis on illness burden. The findings indicate that societal awareness needs to be raised on the detection and prevention of predominant cancer forms and treatment options.

The findings also provide support for more specialized media training in discussions of the intersections of resource access, power distribution, and illness occurrence. Media often frame chronic illnesses as an individualised responsibility for cause, prevention, and management. Such discourse is, on the one hand, perceived as

empowering people to make better health choices; however, as noted by the letter writers, the emphasis on the individualised health behaviour framing of illness overshadows the political economy of illnesses discourse, and the responsibilities of policy makers in providing more equitable social healthcare (Marmot, 2005). Media, through what it considers worthy of publication, is likely to play an important role in shaping societal awareness and response. Through responsible reporting on chronic illnesses, identifying the multiple complexities of illness causality and risk management in Fiji, and taking a considered approach in which letters to the editor are published, media could play a significant role in shaping health response in Fiji.

Finally, the three illnesses were represented as socially relevant concerns. Cancer and HIV were presented as socially significant illnesses through discussions of the burden of the illnesses on society. On the other hand, diabetes was presented as a socially significant illness through discussions of causal and solution factors, which positioned the occurrence of diabetes as a social justice concern linked to poverty and lack of access to quality food. The lay-societal recognition of all three illnesses as being socially relevant suggests grassroots support for multisectoral policies directed towards structural reforms for the prevention and management of these illnesses (Glasgow & Schrecker, 2015).

Future studies

In this preliminary study, there was an underlying theme of Christian values in relation to lifestyle choices, particularly in reference to prevention of cancer and HIV. Future research could investigate the role that religion plays in people's responses to cancer and HIV causes, prevention, and treatment options (cf. Phillips 2020 for a study on indigenous Fijian diabetics' experiences and management of diabetes-related risks). From the names of the letter writers, it would appear that writers came from different ethnic backgrounds, and reflect Fiji's rich diversity of cultures. There were also approximately equal representations of male and female letter writers. The study, thus, appears to indicate that there is widespread societal concern about the presence and prevalence of diabetes, cancer, and HIV in Fiji. Further analysis could determine whether the combination of ethnicity and gender, in relation to other demographic factors, plays a significant role in societal responses to significant illnesses within the community and to people living with these illnesses. The use of this study and proposed future studies could help tailor Fiji's public health messages in order to develop a better reach with the audience.

Conclusion

This research provides an analysis of lay societal perspectives on illnesses and people living with those illnesses. Lay perspectives on health lie at the intersection of biomedical, health behavioural, and political economy discourses. The favoured discourse is tied to a person's social, political, and economic power, resource access, sociocultural context, and subjective experience. Thus, an analysis into lay knowledge is vital for understanding societal perspectives on the importance of social determinants on health outcomes, the understandings and experiences of the manner in which power, macro and micro-level politics, and governance intersect to provide different causal pathways for resource access to prevent illnesses, or, if an illness is present, to determine what resources are available to people to respond to the illness.

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