

# Her Side of the Kava Story

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# Presentation outline

- Study context
- Aims and objectives
- Methodology
- Key findings



# Her Side of the Kava Story

*Exploring the effects of **heavy** kava use  
based on the perspective of Tongan  
women residing in Auckland, New  
Zealand*

# Study context

- Kava
- **Shift:** From (Traditional) **Formal** towards (Contemporary/social) **informal** uses of kava
- 1990s marked increase in kava clubs throughout NZ
- **Key statistics:**
  - a) Pacific are 6x more likely to have consumed kava
  - b) 63% of Tongan males and 16% of Tongan females reported using kava at least once.
  - c) Tongan were primary consumers of kava, indicating that they used kava **126 times per year**, at least once per week.

# KAVA – Piper Methysticum





# Thesis aim

The aim of this thesis is to explore the perspective of Auckland-based Tongan women, regarding the effects of heavy kava consumption.

# Thesis objectives

Research objectives were as followed:

- To investigate the Tongan women's general knowledge of kava and kava use among the Tongan population.
- To examine the perceived social, cultural and economic effects of heavy kava use based on the perspective of the Tongan women.
- To explore the health implications of heavy kava consumption among Tongan users.
- To identify interventions and solutions to reduce heavy kava use in the Tongan communities within New Zealand.





# METHODOLOGY

Qualitative approach

- 20 Tongan women
- Indirect snowballing for recruitment
- Interviewing
- Talanoa
- Analysis: General Inductive approach



# Defining kava

## WHAT IS KAVA?

- Kava is a plant and drink
- Social drink
- Tongan cultural drink

### Social motives for kava use

- Socializing with peers
- Social activities
- Social obligations
- Leisure
- Escape

### Cultural motives for kava use

- Strengthen cultural identity
- To learn Tongan language

### Formal Ceremony and Informal Sessions





# KAVAHOLIC

- Regular kava use
- Altered performance
- Deteriorating relationships
- The shift to Kava kalapu – driver of rates of kavaholic
- Health and appearance

# Social effects

## Positive

1. Building relationships & Friendships
2. Enhancing self-esteem (counsel/encouragement/belonging)
3. Building community (social bonds, collectivity in community)
4. Stress relief

## Negative

1. Lack of time with family
2. Abandonment (wives/children)
3. Family obligations neglected
4. Weakened relationship with children
5. Marital tension (arguments/loneliness as a wife/ extra-marital affairs/ trust issues)



# Cultural effects

- **Strengthening cultural identity**
- **Sharing knowledge about Tongan culture:**
  - Language and song
  - Tongan ritual
  - “Classroom” enriched with culture
  - NZ Born Tongans can access culture through kava
- **Diminishing sacredness of kava**



# Economic effects

- The cost of kava
- Fundraiser and charity
- Income
- Unemployment



# Health effects of kava

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- Relaxed muscles and numbness
  - Sleepiness and fatigue
  - Shaking and tremor
  - Vomiting
  - Skin dermatopathy
  - Exacerbated: Gout
  - Exacerbated: Diabetes
  - Risk factor: Stroke
  - Breathing problems
  - Liver
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Non compliance to medical advice</li><li>• Non adherence to medication</li></ul> |  |
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