

Veivosaki Yaga: Having worthwhile discussions with Pacific midwives

Talei Jackson

Abstract

This article provides a brief overview of the Fijian research methodology Veivosaki Yaga. Veivosaki yaga, developed by Isimeli Tagicakiverata, literally means 'worthwhile discussion'. When engaging in veivosaki yaga, a conversation like a focus group discussion, participants engage in a communal dialogue that requires thoughtful consideration and response.

Veivosaki yaga is currently being used in doctoral research with Pacific lead maternity care (LMC) midwives and their families. This research explores the nature of LMC work on wellbeing, and sustainability challenges for Pacific midwives working within this model of care in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Research question

'What sustains Pacific midwives in LMC practice in Aotearoa NZ?'

Research objectives

My research is on sustainability challenges for Pacific lead maternity care (LMC) midwives. LMC midwives are community-based and provide 95% of all primary maternity care in Aotearoa NZ (Health New Zealand, 2024). Their self-employment contract with Manatū Hauora | the Ministry of Health provides maternity care from conception through to six weeks post-partum (Ministry of Health, 2024). My study aims to explore 1) how LMC work impacts the wellbeing of the LMC midwives and their families, and 2) the strategies that sustain Pacific midwives in their work.

I am interested in this topic because I am passionate about growing our small Pacific midwifery workforce and, in turn, improving engagement with primary care, and health outcomes in Pacific communities. Collectivism is a core value

for Pacific peoples and the importance of family cannot be underestimated (Ministry for Pacific Peoples, 2018). LMC work impacts the wellbeing of midwives and their families, so we cannot learn about this phenomenon from midwives' voices in isolation. Pacific LMC midwives value and support their families, and their families reciprocally value and support them. The quality of these relationships can affect the family dynamic. Hence the voices of midwives' families hold unique perspectives on wellbeing. As a research methodology and data collection method, *veivosaki yaga* lays the foundation for a structured open and honest dialogue within the complexities of the midwife and their family.

Research Design/ Methodologies

As a Fijian researcher, I am committed to adopting Pacific approaches and am using *veivosaki yaga* for my doctoral research. *Veivosaki yaga* is an ontological, epistemological, and methodological assertion of the Pacific worldview, and provides a context in which shared conversations between me, LMC midwives, and their families can occur. *Veivosaki yaga* is a conversation similar to a focus group discussion and is culturally appropriate for collecting data from a group (Tagicakiverata & Nilan, 2018). As the researcher, I embody the chairing role and initiate, control and mediate the discussion, where the participants speak about their experiences. Participants are encouraged to speak openly, in a relaxed manner, to address a serious issue (Tagicakiverata & Nilan, 2018). As the chairperson I can loosely guide the discussion and tailor the questions to elicit responses that speak to the phenomenon being explored.

Veivosaki yaga speaks to me as a researcher as I value the open dialogue and interactions between myself and participants that this methodology/ method enables. Having used *talanoa* as a methodology/ method previously, I appreciated the flexible informality, and participant-led aspect, that *talanoa* offered. I am however enjoying the greater formality that *veivosaki yaga* provides, which requires serious consideration and a response from participants, and keeps the *talanoa* more focused (Tagicakiverata & Nilan, 2018). This is especially suited to my research, given that my participants are both Pacific LMC midwives and (non-midwife) members of their families. *Veivosaki yaga* respects where participants want to take the *talanoa* whilst keeping it contained.

I am mindful of the time and space that my participants generously give me, and the amount of work involved in our interactions. Veivosaki yaga supports an evolving discussion that has purpose and seeks to gain perspectives and knowledge that uniquely belong to each family group. With the style of veivosaki yaga being semi-structured, I hear repeated answers to my questions, which speak to similar experiences, but the interaction of the participants with myself and each other, and their multiple responses, are uniquely theirs. Veivosaki yaga honours the open dialogue but maintains limits, and controls for safety and respect for the LMC midwives and their families.

Words of wisdom/ hints

For future researchers looking at using a Pacific methodology, I encourage you to read widely and find something that feels like the right cultural fit for you and your participants. Reaching out to people who have developed or used specific methodologies can provide information that might not have been published which can help you to decide whether it will be appropriate for your research needs.

Conclusion

Prior to starting my DHSc, I was excited about my topic and the opportunity to use a Fijian methodology. I am currently collecting data and working on a publication as I am presenting my thesis using Format Two: Manuscript Structure. I am finding the process enjoyable, but it is time consuming and requires a lot of my focus, which can be challenging when you wear the many hats commonly seen amongst my Pacific colleagues. As a Pacific researcher, I am aware of the responsibility I have to my wider Pacific community and to the people my research outcomes will impact.

“Optional” Short Bio

Bula vinaka. I am first generation Aotearoa New Zealand born and my ancestors hail from Fiji (Kiuva, Bau, Tailevu) and the British Isles. I work as a lecturer and lead the Pasifika Liaison/ Tapu Ora team in the midwifery department at AUT. I am a doctoral candidate researching sustainability challenges for Pacific lead maternity care (LMC) midwives and am a current recipient of an FHES Staff PG Research Fellowship. I am passionate about growing our Pacific midwifery workforce and in turn improving health outcomes in Pacific communities.

My doctoral research is part of a larger HRC project involving an interdisciplinary team of researchers from AUT/ UOA Management, Employment Relations, and Midwifery. The project is seeking to identify the impact of work and non-work factors on the lives of LMC midwives to discover how the nature of LMC work impacts midwives and their whānau. The project is being carried out in collaboration with the New Zealand College of Midwives (NZCOM), Ngā Maia Māori Midwives Aotearoa, and Pasifika Midwives Aotearoa. A key feature of the project are the three specific research streams that focus on Pākehā, Māori and Pacific midwives and I am leading the Pasifika stream. I am grateful for the support of the wider HRC team and my supervisors Dr Janine Clemons, Associate Professor Sione Vaka and Professor Eleanor Holroyd.



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