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The concept of self and success from an *iTaukei* perspective in Fiji: Before and after education and development

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ABSTRACT

Modernity has ushered poverty, crime and unemployment which were near nonexistent in traditional lifestyles. Perception of basic things in life lies on notion of *vanua* epistemology which has been disrupted, redundant and has been referred to as the 'other' knowledge by colonizers (Nabobo- Baba, 2006). An *iTaukei* (indigenous) self perspective is crucial to understand in order to comprehend the *iTaukei* perspective of these basic things in life. Education and development have deeply impacted local communities in the Fiji Islands located in the South-West Pacific.

Modernity alters the discourse of self in *iTaukei* villages. Some communities that were once communal and relational now become individualised and rationalised. It is interesting to note that with the development of infrastructure such as roads and jetties, *iTaukei* communities tend to become more economically and progress driven and have failed to nurture their century old customs of acknowledging and reciprocating relations with others and their surroundings. This drive towards economic prosperity and progress have also brought about its own shortfalls such as failing welfare system where *iTaukei* communities have filled up the streets as beggars or end up in prisons. This paper discusses the thought processes of *iTaukei* individuals in a typical indigenous Fijian community responds to the modern tenacities of today. It further examines the dynamics of social or communal living from an individualized perspective that rationalizes the behavior of the society in general.

Keywords: Traditional living, indigenous knowledge/philosophy, education, development

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1. Introduction

The Republic of the Fiji Islands is at crossroads of development and education. Being nested as a tiny island nation in the South West Pacific region has its own set of challenges and dilemmas. Since early Christian missionaries' contacts in the 1830s, the societal changes have shifted the modus operandi of the indigenous community (*iTaukei* hereafter). These changes are not uncommon as it has also been experienced in other contexts (see Comaroff and Comaroff, 1999 and Rack, 1989). Local

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scholars such as Nayacakalou (1978), Ravuvu (1988 & 1983) and Nabobo-Baba (2006) have noted similar changes in the dynamics of the *iTaukei* culture. However, the studies were primarily done on Fiji's main island where most of the economic development has taken place since Fiji gained her independence from colonial rule in 1970.

This study examines the self concept and how does it view success in the case study community. The community chosen was on the basis of convenience to the researcher as traditional protocols had to be observed before the commencement of the study. A series of visits were also scheduled during the three year period as it involved village members who were in the village and also those who reside in urban areas.

Examining the self concept is itself a modern phenomenon. The word self when loosely translated to the *iTaukei* language denotes *au* (I, me) *noqu* (mine) which is seldomly used in the community as it denotes that an air of self-centeredness on the individual. In an *iTaukei* setting the concept of self comes later after the common good of the wider society. Being the most primary building block of society it is prudent to examine this personality of self. The impact has benefited the local communities in vast ways that education and development have been prioritized in some communities. However, the quest for these developments has impacted the local cultures.

Brookfield (1988) and Overton (1988) questions the notion of individualism in the form of *galala* farmers over the traditionally communal forms of farming. Individualism breeds competition whereas communalism fosters cooperation. Individualism weakens the *vanua* identity through arrangements of *tu galala* (Tarabe and Naisilisili, 2008). The shift from communalism to individualism has been brought about by modernity and neo-liberal worldviews to emphasise individual rights/freedoms, independence, justice, equality, access, privacy, votes and democracy that seems to push aside communal right, consensus, respect, generosity, sharing, reconciliation, fulfillment of mutual obligations and cooperation.

The paper contributes to the limited literatures that are available that tends to discuss the how the self concept is construed in a typical *iTaukei* community. Most literatures depict the *iTaukei* from a communal perspective without giving much attention to how an individual interprets the situation that has a resultant communal viewpoint.

The outline of the study is as follows. Firstly, the paper outlines the significance and identifies the primary research questions with brief discussion on the background and the context of the study. This is followed by literature review where the literature gaps are identified that is being addressed in the study. Thirdly, a brief discussion of the how the research was carried out. Since it was situated in traditional village setting, cultural protocols too were observed. The results were discussed utilizing a thematic approach where themes emanating from the study were clustered together and discussed in that manner. The themes were not pre-determined but resulted from the discussions and narratives of the participants. The implications of the findings were then discussed in terms of their connotations to education and development. Finally, the concluding remarks were discussed in tying up the loose ends of the study and present it in a nutshell.

2. Significance

This paper is significant for several reasons. Firstly, it intends to give an insight *iTaukei* living in a typical rural village community. Their daily activities may be similar but not the same to other villages around the country. Secondly, it tries to capture what constitutes to be successful to an *iTaukei* individual in the community. In understanding the basis of success in the traditional setting, will give further insights of how this can be translated to the modern times. Thirdly, with the onset of education and development has brought about challenges for the *iTaukei* to progress or preserve their culture which is considered as archaic. Their cultural obligations have been seen as an impediment towards their success but this paper tries to capture why they are so obligated to such practices.

3. Research questions

The following research questions guided the project during the course of the study:

1. What is the self concept in the *iTaukei* community pre and post education and development?

2. What does it constitute to be a successful *iTaukei* individual pre and post education and development?

Subsidiary lines of enquiry were also developed to elucidate these principal research questions.

4. Background & context

Development, progress and modernization permeate all levels of cultural practices and indigenous communities have to struggle for survival, basic human rights and identities.

Since independence in 1970, Fiji has struggled to be up to par with other developed nations and political upheavals have stalled her progress. Ethnic strains between the two major races have also been exploited to be the cause of the political tensions. Some of the debating issues that have led to such tensions are; land ownership, resource access, distribution of lease revenue, the removal of the *Bose Levu Vakaturaga* - Great Council of Chiefs (GCC) and *Qoliqoli* Bill. All this issues resonates to conflict of individual rights over group or communal ownership. All these debating issues impede the country's response to modernity and the quest for economic prosperity. In order to better adapt to modernisation, individuals will easily conform to the neo-liberal ideas rather than the communal way of life. Traditional communal life is more relational to the surrounding environment and factors in the needs of future generations rather than short term financial gains.

Hence, it is necessary to explore the self concepts of an *iTaukei* individual in contrast to the education.



Figure 1. Map of the Fiji Islands indicating the researched community (red dot).

The community consists of about 250 members who reside in the village, with close to 100 members living elsewhere around Fiji and the world. The community is located about 100 kilometres from the nearest urban centre either Savusavu or Labasa town which can be accessed via unsealed roads.

The main source of income is *yaqona* (piper methsticum) or copra (coconut) plantations. The village is situated on the western coastal line of Natewa Bay and most of its food is also sourced from the sea. However, the mountainous topography is a challenge for the farmers in the community as it rises up to about two hundred feet above sea level just behind the village. With the absence of access roads to their farms, and unfavorable terrain for horses, so the villagers access their farms on foot and it can take at least an hour or two of mostly ascending to their farms and then an hour or two on their way back which is usually descending with loads on their shoulders. Almost all the male elders (above sixty years) in the community have recurring knee problems which they usually attribute to the hilly landscape of accessing their farms.

The children from the community (about sixty of them) attend the local primary school about six kilometers away where they have boarding facilities for children in Years 1 – 8. So the children go on Monday mornings and return on Friday afternoons. Some parents especially for younger children in Years 1 and 2 prefer to keep their children as a Day Scholar where they go in the morning by 6:30am bus and return in the 5:30pm bus. This is the only public service transport available at that part of the day. The parents do take turn in cooking the meals for the children by taking a day each. For secondary education, the children can attend the District's only Secondary school which is about 30 kilometers away.

The community has produced a number of graduates across an array of profession. Amongst the members who were brought up in the village, they went on to be experts in their careers such as; marine scientists, conservationists, theologians, police and military personnel's, public health professionals, teachers and consultants. Many of these members have settled in urban centres and have children who have still close affiliation to the community. Some of their siblings have careers such as lawyers, medical doctors, IT specialists, etc.

The village settings are clustered around close kinships which forms *toxatoxa* (sub-clans) and this in turn forms the *mataqali* (clans) which eventually for the *yavusa* (tribes). Land ownership mimic this formation and even village members have demarcated individual shares of land but land ownership is still communal under *mataqali* unless subleased to individuals from within the *mataqali* or from outside of this relational unit.

5. Literature review

Examination of the nature of self has been one of the main proponents of modern philosophy. It tends to use the modern philosophical lens to interpret the self concept in non-western communities. This has in turn generated a discourse that is derived after these observations. These observations become the western construction of self and are usually charted on the Cartesian dualism plane. Critics of Descartes dualism concept have pointed the presence of two different substances; mind and body and in the presence of a mechanized world (see Nath, 1993; Allen, 1997 & Roland, 1997). The celebrated 'I think therefore, I am' needs to be re-evaluated in light of indigenous *iTaukei* philosophy. In contrast to the *iTaukei* translation of self – au (I), *noqu* (mine) it is a bit boastful and rude to say the least. Bakalevu (1997) had highlighted that *iTaukei* talked of plural form of self such as *keitou/keimami* (we) and *neitou/neimami* (ours) rather than the singular individuality form. *iTaukei* tend to identify more with the *vanua* which loosely translated to land. Ravuvu (1983; pg 70) aptly puts it as;

The Fijian term of *vanua*, has physical, social and cultural dimensions which are interrelated. It does not mean only the land area one is identified with, and the vegetation, animal life, and other objects on it, but also includes the social and cultural system – the people, their traditions and customs, beliefs and values, and the various other institutions established for the sake of achieving harmony, solidarity and prosperity within a particular social context. Its social and cultural dimensions are a source of security and confidence. It provides a sense of identity and belonging. One feels good and comfortable when he feels that he belongs to a particular *vanua* or a social unit identified with a particular territorial area in which its roots are established... In this spiritual dimension, it is a source of *mana* or power to effect things. It is the place where his ancestors preceded him and in which their spirits or souls linger and watch over the affairs of those who come after them. The *vanua* contains the actuality of one's past and the potentiality of one's future. It is an extension of the concept of the self. To most Fijians, the idea of parting with one's *vanua* or land is tantamount to parting with one's life.

This *vanua* concept in Fiji of embracing land and people and the connections, is similar to fonua in Tonga, *enua* in the Cook Islands, *whenua* in New Zealand embrace land and people and their connections (Tu'itahi, 2007).

The symbiotic relationship that an *iTaukei* shares with the *vanua* is a source of life to a community. This connection is far deeper than the modern derivative of ownership. Tuwere (2002; pg 49) alludes to this notion of ownership as; "one does not own the land; the land owns him. Man and land are one". An imbalance in one of the dimensions will disturb the co-existence of *vanua*. Land alienation (physical), kinship/kinred living (social) and loss of values (cultural) are some ways of that can provide a discord on this relationship. The *iTaukei* identity revolves around these tribunal

relationships which in turn affects their sense of belongingness. However, there is a dearth of literature in examining how individuals give up their personal space for the communal goals.

The concept of *vanua* even extends beyond living with the existence of *Bulu* (Underworld) and *Lagi* (the heavens). Nabobo-Baba (2006) highlights this interconnectedness with *vuravura* (earth). What happens on *vuravura* (earth) has connotations to *bulu* (underworld) and *lagi* (the heavens). This notion of relational/interconnectedness is how an *iTaukei* perceives the world. It is always in relation to the environment or surroundings which can be interpreted as how they portray the world. For instance, the concept of time is a typical example of depicting this relational notion. The calendar months are described according to the seasons of foods, fruits, fishes or animal species or the associated activities for those specific times (see Rokowaqa and Meo, 2013). Meetings schedules in *iTaukei* communities are contextual to the daily activities such as; ‘*Ni oti na gunu ti*’ (after breakfast) or ‘*bera na vaxasigalevu*’ (before lunch) which constitutes a few hours. Travel times can be tide-referenced such as ‘*Yuwa levu*’ (High tide) or ‘*Voxa levu*’ (Low tide).

The contextual references are often used when describing things. To describe a number of people who attended a meeting, the response might be: ‘*The room was full*’. The number of students is correlated to a room full of students rather than the use of numerical classifiers. Bakalevu (2003; pg 66) highlights the “rich register of qualitative evaluative terms in the language”. She further points out the inclination to express the whole and not the part, and seeing ‘all or nothing’.

‘Empty’ does not mean that no one was there, but that the room was ‘not full’. Always, the estimation descriptors are relative (ibid).

This relational notion also extends to success or *sautu* in the community. *Sautu* is wealth in abundance or prosperity. Again this wealth is not a measure of economic commodities that permeates society today. It is a measure of values, skills, traditional knowledge and the embodiments of the *vanua*. A successful person is one who is able to fend for the betterment of the whole community rather than the success of an individual. To achieve *sautu*, *yalomatua* (wisdom) must be attained (see Baba, 1993; Tuwere, 2002 & Nabobo-Baba, 2006). This postulation is taken into account in the paper and is being discussed in the later sections.

In *iTaukei*, a well furnished house does not equate to prosperity but a home which welcomes relatives and visitors is given more prominence in the village. This may not be applicable to modern day life where furniture’s and home appliances may be used as a marker of wealth. A chief’s wealth does not lie in the traditional artifacts of *tabua* (whales tooth), mats and foods etc. but on how he is able to gain the respect of his subjects. However, in the modern world, wealth is measured in the assets or investments that that one may possess.

- What is the self concept in the *iTaukei* community pre and post education and development?
- What does it constitute to be a successful *iTaukei* individual pre and post education and development?

6. Methodology

The study embraced an ethnographic approach that spanned over more than two years. The community in focus is a village community in Vanua Levu, the second main island in Fiji. The basic premise for selecting this site was that the researcher is conversant in the local dialect as he is from the area and has already deep trusting relationship with the community. The forged relationship also facilitated any future research projects that may stem out from this particular paper.

The project utilised a qualitative, ethnography, phenomenological, philosophical semantic, and existentialism to explore the successful self concept in terms of development and education. It mimicked *vanua* research framework since it will have to adhere to local cultural protocols to gain ethical entry and access the necessary information (Nabobo-Baba, 2006). The phenomenological approach tried to make sense of trying to gain insights into the participant’s perceptions (Marschll & Rossman, 1995). These lived realities that were observed in the contexts of their existence which and was captured in the narratives of ethnographical phase of the project. This involves interviews and *talanoa*, *vakamuritalanoa* sessions and personal observations where the method of collection will deviate from normal formal means. Angrosino (2008) highlights three ways ethnographers conduct observations; (i) participant observation, (ii) reactive observation and (iii) unobtrusive [non-reactive]

observations. Participant observation was utilised in the research where the researcher had a long term immersion with the host community through its naturalistic settings. DePoy and Gitlin (1998; pg 310) outlines participant observation as “naturalistic data collection strategy in which the researcher takes part in the context under scrutiny”.

In reverence to ethical protocols, information cannot be persistently sought from participants and they need to voluntarily give in the necessary information. The site visits included an initial three weeks visit to the field site where the researcher tried to immerse with village life and blend with the villagers. This includes partaking in traditional ceremonies and will involving the offering of goods and exchange of artifacts. Since the researcher have been away for a prolonged period from the village settings and may have missed other traditional functions, it was appropriate to slowly amalgamate with village activities and functions in order to be blend into the community as one’s own. The length of time to blend into the local village life may differ for a visitor going in for the very first time (may take months) in comparison to a person who have been a frequent visitor (may just take a week or two). This was done in early 2016. Additional shorter visits were accorded to the site during the course of the study. The visits continued up to early 2018 just to verify some of those information gathered earlier on. The visits even continued on after the conclusion of the study just to maintain the cordial relationships established earlier on. In a true *iTaukei* spirit of hospitality, a relationship is not established just for a particular function as relationships needs teed to be maintained despite the circumstances.

Village elders who were more conversant with the changes were identified and liaisons were established to set up *talanoa* sessions. The sessions were done informally and made sure that it did not disrupt the normal day-to-day activities. At times, during functions participant observation was used to capture some realistic scenarios

Some members of the community have also resided in urban centres, especially Suva – the capital of the Fiji Islands. Visits were also accorded to the group to get their views of the concept of development and the impact on the community.

7. Results/discussions

The results will try to address the research questions into themes. Whilst the discussions will be thematic, various narratives/excepts will be utilized to elucidate the perceptions of the respondents. It would be an injustice to provide the narratives that without the translations as most o the data gathering was done in the mother tongue of the researcher.

In the *Vosa VakaViti* (indigenous Fijian language) the letter k is used but has the c sound in the English language, however in the local dialect of this particular researched community, letter k is assumes an epiglottal ‘h’ sound or in linguistic terms suffers from glottal stop (*gato*). The common practice in the indigenous Fijian language is to use the letter x (which is generally used to denote this glottal break) to denote this fricative glottal intonation and indicate that k is missing in contrast to the general Fijian language. Hence *kawa* (family tree) becomes *xawa* (will sound similar to hour) and *Tokatoka* (sub-clan or extended family) becomes *Toxatoxa*.

7.1 Self in the community

It is justifiable to depict the self concept in the context of the community or *vanua*. The self concept will be discussed under the following three sub-headings of; kinship/reciprocal living, naming of siblings and discipline/order as observed during the study. These themes are not only exclusive to this study but there were others that have been observed but will be discussed in a later publication.

7.1.1 Kinship/kindred and reciprocal living

In traditional settings, it prudent that an individual knows his or her relations/kinship. It is common for young children to wander around the village. The child may even have meals around the village without raising an eyebrow from parents. The popular phrase ‘it takes the village to raise a child’ rings true for how a child spends their time in the community. However, it is more likely to be akin with close family members. At times, close family members residing in other villages will also spontaneously ask for the child to go with them and spend a few days. This was observed during the study when an aunt came for a function and asked for a niece to spend a week or two of the school holidays with her

family in a village more than thirty kilometres away. The parents approved the request in principle provided that their daughter was willing to go (*maxutu*) which she readily agreed to.

Traditional living in the *iTaukei* community is fortified by forming these alliances and relationships and this is again strengthened by intermarriages. In attending traditional functions, it is not uncommon to inform others (*vaxasavuirogo*) or wait to be informed (*irogo*) by familial lineage. Turning up for functions individually or in smaller groups from the same domain, to reflect that the groups are not in sync with one another. At times the host party will be enquiring the whereabouts of other expected parties that have not turned up or unaccounted.

Attending functions requires a group to collectively pitch in artefacts, pigs/cows/fish, food or even money. So when an individual turns up on their own, indicates that he/she is able to afford the requirements on his/her own. However, this will be viewed in a negative sense as he/she does not think of others in their group who are trying to meet the obligations warranted.

As was experienced in the study, a family elder communicated the following to other members for a funeral that they were expected to be part of because of the maternal links of the deceased; *Sa tixo e dua na ilava. Sa vica viroga na loga sa tixo xarai. Sa rauti xedatou xarai. Dou qai laxo ga yane me tou qai laxo vata. Sa rauta xarai.* (A pig is already there. There are also some mats. That is enough for us to take. If you all come so that we can go together. That is ample enough for our entourage to present).

In the analysis of the above conversation, the elder was listing out what has been achieved so far, which seems to be fine and well understood. However, the person that this was communicated to was able to identify some of the other things that were missing like *yaqona/tabua*, and some root crops to make the entourage complete. So he made attempts to fulfill these other minor things – if possible and not obliged.

During times of need or sorrow as the above, it is common to re-strengthen these bonds by visitations and to console the family members. A metaphor that was used during the funeral gathering was to this effect;

Ni dau solega na vanua na 'o ni rarawa e rawa ni vaxatautauvatataxi xei na dau xumuxumunivata na 'o ni dau vaxarau tau na uca. Ia ni sa dau lolosi na vanua, eda dau xumuxumunivata o xeda na dravata se veiwexani. Sa xarai saraga na tagi ni vanua. (When the community is grieving, it is comparable to the mass formation of clouds that results in the precipitation of rain. Hence when someone passes on to the next life, it is the relations of the deceased that tries to converge and grieve and tries to console the immediate family members. That is the grieving of the land and community).

It is very common that *iTaukei* to try to make every attempt possible to attend to funerals of family members and it would be disrespectful to the community not to attend without a genuine justification. Rika (1975) had earlier alluded to the fact that he had to forgo sitting for his final paper over a family funeral. The duties, kinship obligation and responsibility to the community supersede personal commitments. The cost can be mammoth if calculated in monetary terms.

During the study, the researcher's a paternal Uncle passed away and four of the siblings were living in the Western part of the country (two daughters were married of and two sons having casual work in the construction industry). The researcher being the eldest in the group had the responsibility to convene a meeting to ascertain the logistics of travelling. Funerals are another opportunity for consanguinity to meet, catch up and renew ties. The siblings cannot travel alone as it would be deemed inappropriate as *e maqa na wexana* (do not have relatives). The entourage swelled in numbers, so in the end the group who made the trip was more than thirty relatives or fellow kinsmen to accompany the four siblings. The cost amounted to more than few thousand dollars which was being pitched in by members of the group.

Another interesting observation during the traditional presentation ceremony, the receiver after a few sentences of appreciation had to relate the process to the members who were part of the entourage and also not there.

Qai rogo taucoxo na lewe ni laxolaxo, dou rogo mai... dou rogo na tixo... dou rogo na maqa ni tixo rawa, sa mai ciqomi tixo na iyau, o au na xena tamata au sa mai ciqoma, na nodatou iyau me sa xoto madaga itawaca, xo au mai vaxarogotaxina, xua ni dua e rogo cala, xena irogo me tau donu. (Please pay attention, lend me your ears. Those who are here today, those of you who are not

here today, I have received the *tabua*, I am your servant who have received it on your behalf. The whales tooth is here and will be here for all of you. I am your servant who is graciously informing you so that no one is misinformed, may the message be received in good faith).

These anecdotes illuminate the intimate grounding of interconnectedness. The above affirms Nabobo-Baba's (2006), interconnectedness of the three worlds. The receiver is informing those who are physically present (earth) and those who are not there in this world and the other two realms. Bad omen is sometimes attributed to those who try to deceive or misinform the threefold realm. At times when the harvests from the gardens are not plentiful, or the catch from the sea is not so much, it will attribute to such bad premonition.

7.1.2 Naming of siblings

Naming in *iTaukei* community shows links to your *xawa* (family tree). Parents or guardians should be able to bestow the name and even the knowledgeable Grandparents views are often solicited on the names of newborn so that old names in the family lineage are revived. When strange names do pop up out of the norm, community members who are familiar with the family lineage will often ask – E *vaxayacaveicei*? (Whom he/she is named after?) . At times some relatives do visit the village and when they come to know of a child's name, they will quickly make concluding statements such as; *Oii!! E nona yaca o X?* (Ohh!! So it is X's namesake?) It will be insult to name a child out of their family ties without exhausting names within the *xawa* first. It shows that parents (even Grandparents) or the *Toxatoxa* (extended family) has lost their touch with their family lines or history.

The researcher had this personal experience when, he named his eldest daughter to his paternal Great Grandmother who has long since passed away and the name was no longer existent within the extended family. Even though the name is around with other members from a different *Toxatoxa* but as soon as the head of that *Toxatoxa* heard of this naming, he approached the researcher and thanked him personally that this is where the name rightfully belongs and he forcefully bestowed the name, thinking that no one in the researcher's extended family will take up the name as she has passed away more than fifty years ago.

It is not uncommon to have children being affectionately called Kuku (Grandfather/Grandmother) or *Yaca* (if named after father/mother or someone close) instead of being called their names as they have been named after the grandparents. It would be inappropriate to call them by their names in the presence of the older generation especially if they assumed to be summoned. It is usually the older generation who summons the younger generation. These pseudonyms would be used around in the community but when the student enters schooling, they will assume the names on their birth certificates as the use of these pseudonyms is being discouraged in the school premises. However, to their peers the child still assumes the *nom de plume*.

It was also observed that in the older generations they assume aliases that may have been informally bestowed by other community members. They may stem out from talents, (dis)abilities, habits or even other lifestyles. For instance the researcher's Grandmother was fondly known as *Somica* (suck) for her prowess fishing ability and then she would have a liking to suckling the heads of small fishes which was cooked in *lolo* (coconut milk). Although her name was *Titilia* even her namesakes later on assumed the name of *Somica* as well. At times when the namesake shows glimpses of skills of their namesake remarks from older members of the community would be; *Sa rauta! Sa ucui nona tolo dina xina* (No wonder! (S)he is just following the footsteps of his/her namesake).

When a child progresses through adulthood, there are more respectable ways of addressing them such as *Tinai* Luke (Luke's Mother) or *Tamai* Luke (Luke's Father). So the personhood is more relational to other members of the community. This is a common practice in other parts of Fiji as suggested by Nabobo-Baba (2017). This relational concept is also applied when the individual becomes a grandparent and they will be known as *Tubui Watisoni* (Watisoni's grandparent). With the individual being called these more respectable names - reminds the individual of his/her role as a parent (*Tamai/Tubui*) or as grandparent (*Tubui*) that he/she needs to fulfill. This will be an interesting and researchable issue in contrast to the rise in defilement/molestation cases in the *iTaukei* community. Correspondingly, the individual is expected to behave in the norms and be conversant in the protocols as being ascended by the relational concept.

7.1.3 Order & discipline

To elicit the self-concept of the community, it would be appropriate to allude to an episode where the researcher was a participant. The village had engaged in a *yavirau* – a form of communal fishing. This is only done during a communal or very important function is held in the village. During the high tide the young members of the village condoned off a designated area and several fishing nets are being used with coconut fronds tied to the floaters so that it scares the fish away.

It was a long demanding process as it as the young members were divided into two groups and dropped off designated points on the beach in the early morning. First they have to wade then swim with their fishing nets until they reach the other group and thus forming an enclosure. The enclosure now will form an oval shape where one half of the oval has the young members of the community whilst the half is the sea shore – thus leaving the fish inside roaming around aimlessly. Once they form the enclosure they will slowly move ashore and wait for the tide to go out and the young members can now be replaced by the others as the difficult part is over but the arduous task of waiting for low tide begins.

In this particular incident, a young over excited boy in the thrill of seeing so many fishes in the enclosure decided to let go of his spear into the enclosed space. This is greatly discouraged as it could set the fish into frenzy and they may try to escape the enclosure leaving all the efforts in vain. It is usually when the water is almost ankle deep then it is allowed – *tara*. The researcher was sitting down with the village elders over a bowl of *yaqona* on the shoreline. As soon as the boy threw his spear, the *mataqali* (clan) leader for the particular boy grimaced, as he knew that repercussions of the boy's action will befall the clan. In this case, they have to atone for that misdemeanor through a *ore* (punishment) which varies according to the misdeed or wrongdoing committed. Since it was a communal activity and almost the whole village was involved, they resorted to make *vaxalolo* (pudding or dessert) that is again involves the collective effort of the clan to be offered to other members of the community for the atonement.

The upbringing of the child is the responsibility of the community. It does not necessarily lie within the nuclear family as observed in the above scenario. The whole clan was ridiculed for the boy's overzealous behavior and the clan members are tasked to keep person's behavior in check.

Often when someone commits a crime in the district, the members of other villages would ask; *E luvei cei?* (Who are the parents?) and if they are not able to get a plausible response then they will inquire again: *O ratou xei cei?* (Which group or clan does he/she belong to?).

During the initial phase of the study, the researcher was trying to get acquainted with the community (after more than four years of absence) was being jovially joked upon the turning up of the young members community (especially teenagers) and the researcher was not able to identify them or their parents. This indicated that someone is far divorced from the village activities and lacks the basic knowledge of village life which is kinship (*veiwexani*).

The *vanua* becomes the safety net of the community. Mcnaught (1975; pg 89) had duly asserted that “the community had precedence over the individual”. The intention of individual is to serve the *vanua* first and in accomplishing those, the personal desires are met. The intention of the *vanua* is the general well being of its members and in this way no members are being left wayward. An individual in the community is always conscious of this social structure of the *vanua*.

7.2 Success in the context Sautu (Abundance) versus Vutuniyau (Wealth)

Success is another concept that *iTaukei* defines differently from the modern definition. Success is always a desired state of being for any individual or community. However, the concept of success may vary for different societies and an *iTaukei* community is of no exception. Some of the translations of success from the community allude to *qaqa* (warrior or strong person), *tamata daucaxacaxa* (hardworker), *tamata mamaxutu* (energetic person) or *yalomatua* (wise individual).

7.2.1 Na Qaqa (Warrior/Strong person)

The term denotes a strong individual who has the physical attributes of doing the assigned tasks. During tribal wars, it may reflect his prowess during battles. Literatures have suggested that these *qaqa* are usually approached or offer their services as mercenaries to other domains where they are affiliated to.

This communal allegiance permeates all traditional living and during the war days before western influence it is common for chief to ask for reinforcements from neighboring clans to assist in fighting off the enemies. As such, if your assistance is being sought and you know your ties to the clan that is seeking your assistance then you need to reciprocate such calls. It is more voluntary rather than being asked to seek after.

A 94 year old informant in relating to how he was amongst the chosen few to from the village to be part of the Fiji Defense Force during World War II. He stated that something came to him that if he was asked to demonstrate his suitability for such assignment, he would have clubbed someone to death. There was no room for negotiation *baleta ni xaci ni vanua* (It was my duty to my society). It was not a decision for me to make as the *vanua* has given me that privilege and I had to respond to it. The late Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna (a high Chief and a Member of the Legislative Council) was chosen to head a team of recruiters (mainly consist of *Bulis* [District Officers] and *Rokos* [Provincial Administrators]) because of his Chiefly status;

Saaa!! E maqa ni rawa ni tale lala na Talai sa bale. Na xeda irogorogo xarai – ni baravi xo e maqa ni dua e bole. (Nooo!! The Commissioner cannot return empty handed. It is our reputation – that this side of the island – no one volunteered).

Ravuvu (1974; pg 17) had earlier shared sentiments of how the *iTaukei* revered Ratu Sukuna as it will be a shame by not responding for what he had requested.

Eda na sega ni kilai na iTaukei kevaka ena sega mada ni dave e liu na noda dra. (Fijians will never be recognised unless our blood is shed first).

According to the informant he was 'unfortunate' that he did have any active service as he was in the reserves awaiting deployment when the international crisis was resolved.

Even today, descendants of such person(s) will still portray some of the attributes of their ancestors in other less violence forms. Fiji's have been renowned for their peacekeeping duties around the world have been largely attributed to this communal bondage that greatly resembles traditional forms of warfares. Since confrontational tribal wars are over the *tamata qaqa* (warrior) concept are now being transformed to *tamata daucaxacaxa* (hardworker) or *tamata mamaxutu* (energetic person) that is relevant to today's context. It is not uncommon for young members of the community to embark on some tasks like sugar cane cutting which can take up to three months where the members engage and entirely give up their income for certain community development projects like community school or the village church. This is mostly done on a voluntarily (*bole*) basis. The most recent one was in 2018 where it was for village development funds.

7.2.2 *Tamata daucaxacaxa* (hardworker), *tamata mamaxutu* (energetic person)

Another concept of success is being a hard worker or an energetic person. The concept is essential in communal living as it very loosely bound and being considered as lenient type of living from the outside world. However, to succeed in such type of living will need some form of genius to facilitate and drive such noble intentions.

An 89 year old female respondent provided her version of typical chores of a village woman as; *Tamata kaukauwa e tamata mamaxutu. Na yalewa e dau maqa ni tixo dei vaxadua. Ni oti mai na nona vaxayasailava, e sa na saqa sara na vaxayavi. Ni saqa toxa na vaxayavi, e rawa ni vica na nona lawa ni nona loga.* (A strong person must be energetic. A woman should always be active. After going out fishing, meals are prepared. She can also do weaving, whilst waiting for food to be cooked).

The above sentiments, indicates that a hard worker or an energetic person should be good at multi-tasking. They should be constantly on the go and have an affinity towards such chores.

A young member of the community emphasized the use of time in the community. He explains the task of *boxa* – where young men rise early in the morning to do their chores before breakfast. The gist of the idea is to avoid working during the day as the heat of the sun will be at its hottest. So usually they attend to their gardens from dawn until about 9:00am and then they return to the village and have breakfast. During the day they can attend to some household chores or other work that can be done under the shades of the hot grimacing sun. In the afternoon, they can again spend a few hours again in the gardens. The gardens that they usually attend to in this case are the cassava plantation which is usually close by the community. For *yaqona*, yams and *dalo* plantations which are being a bit distant

from the community, the villagers usually have makeshift camps in the forest, so that they can stay for a few days before return to the village.

A 78 year old lamented at the challenges of getting the youths to meet the demands of a modern society.

Au sa maqa ni xila na cava era caxava na taba yalai ena gauna ni xua. Ra sa maqa ni nanuma na vanua. Ni na xaci mai na vanua sa maqa ni ra vaxaivua. Sa ra vuli. Sa levu na veivuxe se veivaxatorocaxetaxi, ia sara gogo tu na nodra bula. (I don't know what the youths are doing today. They do not think of the vanua. How they will respond to the obligations of the vanua. They are educated. There are lots of assistance and development, but they are lethargic.

Ravuvu (1988; pg 67) had noted to this issue earlier; "much of what is taught in school had little relevance to the local context and to the living style of the people". This indolent attitude of the youths can be attributed to *vucesa* or lazy person. In the community, a lazy person is one who does not have plantation (for young males), or does not know chores of woman like weaving, fishing and other duties (for young females). This *vucesa* is antithetical to *tamata daucaxacaxa* (hardworker) or *tamata mamaxutu* (energetic person) and a precursor to the *gogo* or the lethargic lifestyle.

A respondent had skeptic views of formal education of encouraging individual rights over communal responsibilities.

E sa maqa na yalovata ... Baleta bexa ni ra sa vuli na tamata. Sa vulica bexa na nodra dodonu, ia na tuvaxavanua e tixo na xenia tavi. Na vuli e maqa ni xaca – e xasixa, ia e dauvaxasixa taxa na xa. Ia xamu sa tu xoni – sa leqa sara ga. (There is no unity now. Maybe people are educated. They have learnt about their individual rights but living in a community has its own responsibilities. Education is not bad either. It tries to mould or improve things. But what we are experiencing now is distressing).

With the tenets of modernity setting in, it places more focus on the individual rather than the communal goals. Though, in the village setting the dynamics is communally oriented it should not be confused with village communalism. Sahlins (1972; pg 266) had earlier noted this;

... village communalism does not describe the native mode of production nor its system of property in productive resources. The mode of production is more properly described in social terms as familial.

The communal goals are achieved by the various sub-groups such as *Toxatoxa* (extended family) fulfilling their responsibilities first. The set-up of the village is such that houses are clustered around into these sub-groups. If some members of the community opt to settle outside the village boundary near their own plantations (*tu vaxagalala*), they still have close alliances with other members in the village. Often when they come to the village for church services on Sundays, then they usually spend the lunch together. In terms of functions of weddings, funerals, etc these sub-groups are the first one to converge and will be the last one to disperse.

Another elderly gave advice of how daily living in the village should constitute;

Au dau tovola vei xedra na yalewa ni tixi na sobu – ni dou vaxasaqa magiti vaxabibi ni sigalevu, dou dauvaxasaqa vaxalevu. Da maqa ni xila na sola ena yaco mai. Dau vaxamadua ni ra yaco mai qai maqa na xa me ra magia. Ni da toxa e lomanixoro – eda maqa ni dauvaxasaqa me baleti xedaga. Veitalia qai sova na magiti me qai sova na magiti me xei vuaxa –se vaxayagataxi tixo ga xarai. (I always tell the ladies from my side of the village – when cooking lunch try to cook a lot of staple food. We never now visitors who might come around. It is embarrassing for them to arrive and we do not have food to feed them. When we are in the village, we should not cooking food sparingly. Even if it means giving out the waste to the pigs, it is still useful – nothing is a waste).

The above highlights the familial responsibilities, since the village elder advices the young women 'on my side' referring to her *Toxatoxa*. If they do not perform their duties then, it is not only an embarrassment on their part but the whole village community.

So by having someone to be *Tamata daucaxacaxa* (hardworker), *tamata mamaxutu* (energetic person) does not only augur well for the family but to the whole community as well. These are the members that the community will rely on and most times they are the ones who cannot go empty handed.

7.2.3 *Yalomatua* (Wise individual)

The community is very spiritual as it mostly describes an individual according to the qualities of the spirit (*yalo*). It is common for members to come up with some phrases such as *tamata yalosixa* (person with good or kind spirit), *tamata yalovovo* (person with a difficult heart to convince), *tamata yalolevu* (person with courageous heart), *tamata yalolailai* (person who gets discouraged easily) or *tamata yalosavu* (person with a compassionate heart). This spiritual element dictates the behavior of the individual and the character of a person.

Yalomatua when loosely translated denotes to the *yalo* (soul) has reached a status of *matua* (old) or to use learning spaces term of wisdom. Nainoca (2011) identified the forms of *yalomatua* can be used in three contexts; to describe a person, an attitude and to illustrate an action. Someone is referred to be *yalomatua* when they have ascribed to this maturity stage. Their age can be numerically young but they have reached or can perform or behave in adult like status. *Yalomatua* is when individuals have an attitude to become self-sufficient or self-reliant. This outlook of life permeates their whole being. For instance, the young male members need to partake in the expected norms or behaviours of adult males in the community like gardening, fishing, weaving baskets and even being conversant with ceremonies or protocols.

The action of a child is deemed to be *yalomatua* when they try to become independent that it is unnecessary to supervise them. Antithetical to *yalomatua* is *yalowai* (watery spirit) or those who are not able to make those firm decisions and needs constant guidance or supervision.

Unlike wisdom, the term *yalomatua* is never used to describe the elderly as it is assumed that it should be automatic transition. However, it is common to refer to them as plain *matua* (old) and that they now do possess the *mana* or *sau* that has been commonly referred to as chiefly power (Tomlinson, etc). The presence of the elderly in the community is considered to be a blessing as with old age offers sensible advice and guidance.

At times not following the advice of the *matua* results in *vele* (a powerful and effectively influential to cause ill (*tauvimate*), being unproductive (*bulagogo*) or demise (*mate*). A productive member of society can become lethargic because of this *vele*. If things are not going right then they will try to think of such incidents where they might have incurred a *vele*. Even looking after the *matua* is believed to give blessing to the carers. Hence in the researched community none of them a placed in Old People's Home. Even in urban centres, the older members are being looked after by their siblings. A *yalomatua* person will never shy away from the duties of looking after the elderly. In the community, it was observed that on there was an elderly who was staying with nieces or nephews rather than their biological siblings as they were in urban centres and the village elder refuses to settle in the urban centres.

8. Implications of the research to education or development

It is important to note that whilst the community still maintains strong communal values, the onset of modernity and development also has its implications on the community.

For instance, the school values espouse western ideals of individualism rather than communalism. The assessment done in the local school is more individualised rather than collective outcomes. Siblings are divided up in classes or year levels depending on their age group and seldom mix with one another as classroom rules refrains others (from other classes/levels) from entering a class or year level. This contradicts the upbringing done in the community of kindred and reciprocal living where they mingle around in their community with their relations.

Secondly, individuals share a common identity rather than just names. This is evident in the names that they share and it is much more than the names. Siblings may be known through their aliases which show their relations to other members in the community. However, in schools or other formal western oriented organizations, they need to confront their identity with their individualized names. This often offends cultural protocols of addressing first names of the elder members of the community in the presence of others.

Another concept that emanated from this research is how order and discipline was maintained in the community. The communal strand that was evident in the ore was seen as a deterrent to the whole community. The whole community is responsible for the upbringing. The popular adage of 'it

takes a village to raise a child rings true' in the researched community where the roles and responsibilities of upbringing a child was a collective one rather than the individual rights and responsibilities being espoused by Eurocentric societies.

Being successful in an indigenous concept may constitute an abundance of everything from commodities to communal values. This has been alluded by *Tuwere* (2002) as *bula sautu* which has more of a rich aesthetics to *vutuniyau* which is economical wealth or material possession. *Sautu* is communally achieved whilst *vutuniyau* is individually attained. Modernization has defined successful as having an abundance of resources that could be converted for financial gain. The concept of private proprietorship is foreign to the community. In the pursuance of common good, no one is marginalized or being left out to fend for themselves. The success of a person does not focus on the individual but rests on him, his family, relatives and the whole community. A common question people would ask if a person is trying to gain some prominence is "What he has done to his family/relatives/village"? So if someone in a leadership role in an organization, it is not uncommon to find fellow kinships being recruited or certain projects being done for the village or community. However, in light of modernity principles this would be not so transparent or conflict of interest that is now associated with corruption.

To be unaware of your relations/kinship is considered rude and inappropriate. At times the term *qavuqavu* (discourteous) is being used. Success is also partially defined in knowing your kindred and carrying out the responsibilities associated with it. Affluence is achieved horizontally in the community rather than vertically which is vested in the individual. To have in abundance and not share amongst fellow kinsmen who may not have ample of it, is being considered mean and parsimonious. For instance, a case was related to the researcher how a worker for a logging company came to work in the area and was enticed by the community. When the company ceased operations, the worker (who was not related to anyone in the community) brought over his family to settle in the village. The family was looked after by the Chiefly family and given a place to build his house and ample arable land for cultivation. The family remained in the village until the children were in their teens and had to access secondary education in urban centres where they had to move to an urban centre. In this sense the *veiwexani* concept extends not only to relations but even to friends who are in need.

When food is in abundance the young members usually assist the widowed members of the village. A village youth returning from his garden will be obliged to give a few root crops to an elderly member of the village. A young woman returning from fishing will occasionally be obliged to share their catch with those who are too old to go out to the sea. Even young school boys whom may be returning from gathering firewood cannot walk past an elderly dwelling without replenishing the elderly supply of firewood. *iTaukei* individuals have a communal responsibility rather than a singular obligation to one's own self. Upbringing of children in the village is a communal obligation and even some toddlers may be reared by close relatives in nearby villages. This is done to show love/care for the child and also when the child grows up s/he remembers that at one time s/he had spent some time in that particular village and will know that s/he have some close relatives there. Even when a child misbehaves an adult will swiftly try to address the child and may even inflict corporal punishment as it will reflect badly on the community for a child to be delinquent. The popular adage of 'it takes a village to raise a child' rings true to this effect.

A common belief of the *iTaukei* is that the wealth emanates from the heart and will only flourish if it is invested in the well being of other people. They may have nothing but will share whatever little that is left with relatives and visitors alike. Wealth is something that has to be advanced horizontally rather than invested vertically towards an individual.

Even leadership roles are sometimes courteously passed around community members. This act usually emanates from good leadership (*veivaxaliuci*) and good communication skills (*veirogorogoci*). To forcefully usurp a leadership role is not a *iTaukei* way of life as one has to display leadership qualities to members of the community. The presence of the *Sau Turaga* (Kingmakers) acts as the internal check and balances of leadership hierarchy.

In contrast to the modern world, a child stays within the nuclear family and hardly leaves the clutches of the parents. Upbringing is mainly the responsibility of the parents and with divorces or broken families the responsibility now surmounts the single parent/guardian. This causes a lot of pressure on the child's upbringing leads to early delinquency and later on crime.

The *qaqa* psych is a strong person mentality that is usually associated with warriors. Even though today this warrior like status is being transcended to the ability of an individual to partake and immersed in the traditional obligations that has a communal orientation. Communal obligations permeate village life and engage its members on a regular basis. These have been attributed to the three domains of village life of *vanua* (communal), *lotu* (Christianity) and *matanitu* (State). The fulfillment of these separate entities is the goal of the members of the community. Previously all these domains were entwined into a singular social fabric of *vanua*. With the onset of modernity, the religion of the community changed to Christianity and people were now governed by the modern state that had its own obligations to be fulfilled. So in order to fulfill these roles in the various domains, warrants the attitude of a hardworker (*tamata daucaxacaxa*) or energetic person (*tamata mamaxutu*).

A *tamata daucaxacaxa* (hardworker) or *tamata mamaxutu* (energetic person) is one who consistently strives to fulfill the various obligations proffered his/her way. One of the indicators of *tamata daucaxacaxa* (hardworker) or *tamata mamaxutu* (energetic person) is they never seem to be idle or unoccupied. There are always up to something or will find something constructive to be occupied with. If weather or circumstances derails their initial plan, they will have other activities to occupy them with so that the time opportunity is not wasted. This is where the *yalomatua* (wise individual) is able to pre-determine the complexities of the activities and extricate the priorities. In the face of modernity and development, the community essentially needs individuals to possess wisdom (*yalomatua*) to meet the demands in the community. Schools need to find creative ways to nurture these time-tested type of outcomes so that graduates do possess these skillfulness, regardless the whatever career they may undertake.

9. Concluding remarks

The *vanua* concept focuses more on the 'we-experience' over the 'I-experience'. The latter is more akin to individualistic ideals that is brought about by development and education. It does not mean that the individual in a traditional community is null or sterile. Exclusive terms such as *au* (I), *noqu* (mine) is considered as rude in contrast to *neitou* (ours) and *neimami* (we) which is more inclusive. This inclusiveness is generally reflected in the community where everyone is involved and the daily living. The *vanua* acts as the safety net for the community and ensures that everyone has a fair chance to decent living. Whilst *vutuniyau* (wealth) is vertically inclined and can be achieved individually, the *sautu* concept is communal, where everyone partakes in the process and the sense of richness in wealth (*yau*), food (*magiti*), fruits (*xau vuata*), fish (*ilava*) and values (*itovo*) permeates the community. The *sautu* oozes in the community and even the vulnerable are able to have a decent living. The wealth of the community is embedded in the people and their connected with their relations.

The young members of the community are exposed to this way of life early in their lives. They mimic the way elders behave and live off the land and sea; they observe protocols and other ceremonial functions which is *vanua* focused. However, due to western influence of development and education which has fostered Eurocentric ideals, the self-concept has begun to subtly change amongst youths of the community, despite the strong sense of the *vanua* concept. This is also being fostered by enforced principles of individual rights, freedom and democratic doctrines that have assumed that *iTaukei* community was void with these ideals.

A major policy that has affected the *iTaukei* community is the equal rent distribution (ERD) of land leased that came into effect in 2011. All land in any *iTaukei* community in Fiji is governed by the *iTaukei* Land Trust Board (TLTB). This legislature had been in place since 1916 as a result to cease the alienation of indigenous lands from poaching by western influence. The *mataqali* (land owning unit) can lease their land to a tenant for agricultural, residential, tourism or on a commercial basis. The term of lease ranges from 30, 50 or 99 year lease terms. Under the old distribution scheme, the allocations were according to the hierarchy of the *iTaukei* community; TLTB -10% (administration fee), *Turaga* (Chiefs) – 20% and *Lewe ni Mataqali* (Clan members) – 70%. After 2011, the policy changed to ERD where all members regardless of seniority or hierarchical structure receive an equal amount of lease money as long as they are registered in the *Vola ni Kawa Bula* (VKB) registrations of all landowners in the *mataqali*. This deviates from the genuineness of the *vanua* concept as offered in this paper. The members usually proffer their effort for greater good of the community and leaders made the decisions in the best

interest of the community. This was evident in this study as members volunteered to partake in the Malayan Campaign where communist insurgents threatened peace in the region. There were other community projects such as the community school and the village church that involved young members of the community to work in either copra or sugar cane plantations for months on end to contribute wholesomely to these projects. At times, these young members upon return do not receive a stipend as they voluntarily offer their income to the development projects.

The individual rights concept has overwhelmed the shared responsibility that embeds itself in the *vanua* concept. The community does not demand from the individual but the individual assumes the responsibility of where the context warrants (*yalomatua*) wisdom. The stronger members of the community usually provides for other members wherever deemed necessary. This synthesis is present when one possesses *yalomatua* attributes.

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