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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social motives for kava use</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socializing with peers</td>
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<td>Social activities</td>
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<td>Social obligations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leisure</td>
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<td>Escape</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural motives for kava use</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strengthen cultural identity</td>
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<tr>
<td>To learn Tongan language</td>
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</tbody>
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## 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Building relationships &amp; Friendships</td>
<td>1. Lack of time with family</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Enhancing self-esteem (counsel/encouragement/belonging)</td>
<td>2. Abandonment (wives/children)</td>
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<td>3. Building community (social bonds, collectivity in community)</td>
<td>3. Family obligations neglected</td>
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<td>5. Marital tension (arguments/loneliness as a wife/extra-marital affairs/trust issues)</td>
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</tbody>
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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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Side Effects</th>
<th>Complications</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relaxed muscles and numbness</td>
<td>Skin dermopathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleepiness and fatigue</td>
<td>Exacerbated: Gout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaking and tremor</td>
<td>Exacerbated: Diabetes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vomiting</td>
<td>Risk factor: Stroke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Breathing problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Liver</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Non compliance to medical advice
- Non adherence to medication
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