

ENHANCING THE SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE WELLBEING OF PACIFIC COMMUNITIES IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND: RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY IN ACTION

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Background:

Sexual and reproductive wellbeing are inherently intertwined with the rich tapestry of cultural and ethnic diversity. In Aotearoa New Zealand, young people of Pacific descent experience disparities in sexual and reproductive health outcomes.

Methods:

Drawing upon insights from two Pacific-led research projects: Nesian Narratives and Talavou o le Moana, this presentation outlines key sexual health issues confronting Pacific youth and highlights community solutions. Nesian Narratives engaged over 50 Pacific parents, teachers, health promotion and policy staff in talanoa between 2021 and 2023, delving into their perspectives on culturally enhancing sexual health education. Talavou o le Moana, the latest Pacific report from the Youth 2000 survey series (Youth19) was conducted with secondary students throughout Aotearoa in 2019. Pacific students constituted 14.6% of the entire sample (1,130/7,721).

Results:

While Talavou o le Moana revealed that there has been a decrease in Pacific students who ever had sex (36% in 2001 to 25.5% in 2019), less than a third of Pacific students who were sexually active (15.1%; n=121), were always practicing safe sex. When compared to sexually active Pākehā students, sexually active Pacific students were much less likely to always use contraception (30.3% Pacific; 61.6% Pākehā). Furthermore, approximately a quarter (24.7%) of Pacific student reported that they had been touched in a sexual way or made to do sexual things that they did not want. In Nesian Narratives, Pacific parents, teachers, and community leaders highlighted core values essential to develop culturally enhancing relationship and sexuality education – with a universal emphasis on relationships and quality connections.

Conclusion:

For decades Pacific communities have emphasised solutions for addressing sexual and reproductive health concerns. The insights from Nesian Narratives and Talavou o le Moana underscore the necessity for further efforts to cultivate individual and community confidence and competence, and to devise culturally anchored approaches that enhance the wellbeing of Pacific communities.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

The research team received grant funding from the Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC) for Nesian Narratives and the Youth19 Rangatahi Smart Survey.