

**'TAFATOLU MODEL': LOOKING INTO THE ISSUE  
OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN FROM A  
PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE WITHIN THE  
'FALEATA WEST SUB-DISTRICT OF THE  
CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH  
SAMOA'.**

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Faculty of Malua Theological College  
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In Partial Fulfilment of the  
Requirements for the Degree  
Bachelor of Theology

by

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## CONSENT FORM

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## ABSTRACT

As humans, violence against women cannot be tolerated in any form, in any context and in all circumstances. This paper discusses Violence against Women in the Faleata West Sub District of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa from the *Tafatolu* Approach, as it continues to increase. It was premised on the understanding that with all the work being done to date to eliminate violence against women locally, regionally and internationally, majority seems to provide a bandage solution. The need to look deeper into the root cause of the problem is greater than before.

The primary aim of this paper is therefore, to look at the potential root causes of violence through the Christian lenses, and recommend ways in which the Church, hereinafter, the Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS) can assist; targeting the spiritual aspect of our people's lives, in a quest to eliminate violence against women. The thesis will hopefully support the CCCS with its pastoral care, specifically in fulfilling its healing and saving ministry through the elimination of violence against women.

In doing so, the thesis looks at one of the Pastoral Care Counseling Model commonly known as the "*Tafatolu* Model" to shed some light onto how the Church can contribute towards the elimination of violence against women from the Pastoral Perspective.

Part of the thesis draws reference to the voices of nineteen (19) participants in Samoa who represent the victims of VaW, perpetrators, service providers, cultural experts, church ministers and ministers' wives.

## DECLARATION

I declare that this work has not used any material that has been previously submitted for a degree or diploma in another institution without due acknowledgment.

I also declare that the work has not used any material, audio or recording, without proper acknowledgment of the sources.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **DEDICATION**

The Thesis is dedicated to my beloved mother, the late Vaoiva Leau Lemusu Onesemo. Gone but never forgotten, she remains an inspiration, especially during the most challenging times in my life. To my mother Sasae Matautia Lemusu, I wish you good health and happiness for you take on together with me, the many struggles I have encountered in this learning journey. To all my families here in Samoa and abroad, thank you all for your tremendous support.

To my father in law, the late Lealailepule Taefu Vaauli Taefu; my mother in-law Delilah Vaauli Taefu, your love and prayers kept the determination going to serve and to glorify God.

To my wife, Cecilia Taefu Niuatua Onesemo, thank you for remaining truthful to our vows to be supportive of each other, in good and bad times. To my sons, Cyrus Stevensons, Darius Christian and Ahasuerus Carnelian Leo, I thank God for all of you.

Last and foremost, to all the women and girls in Samoa and globally, who have experienced violence in any form, this work is for you.

To God be the glory now and forever, Amen.

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“Praise the Lord! How good it is to sing praises to our God; for He is gracious,  
and a song of praise is fitting.” (Psalm 147:1)

I would like to thank and acknowledge my Supervisor, Reverend Kara Ipinui, for his guidance and patience with me, to ensure a quality work is completed. *Fa'afetai tele lava i lau Susuga le Faifeau Faiaoga!* I extend great appreciation to my Teacher and his family, Susuga Reverend Dr. Taipisia Leilua and Vaisola *ma le fanau*. Thank you for your motivation and support. I thank all the members of my *Auaiga* (Malua spiritual family) for your encouragement, especially at a time when I needed it the most.

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I thank my family at SVSG and work colleagues; Muliagatele Pepe Tevaga, thank you for the interesting conversation we've had on this work. To the interviewees for this work, I thank each and everyone of you for your time and views as expressed.

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To God be all Honor and Glory, Now and Forever more, Amen!

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCCS Congregational Christian Church Samoa

VAW Violence against women

UN United Nations

EFKS Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa

FWSD Faleata West Sub District

IPV Intimate Partner Violence

WHO World Health Organisation

SVSG Samoa Victim Support Group

NGO Non Government Organisation

NHRI National Human Right Institute

## INTRODUCTION

My interest in addressing violence against women was borne from my past employment with the Samoa Victim Support Group (hereafter SVSG) from 2012 to 2018, as a Case Officer and later, a Case Manager. This interest was further strengthened when I entered Malua Theological College as a student, learning to become a church minister. As a theological student, I developed a desire to help the community through the *aiga* and *nu'u*. I enjoyed the challenges inherent in working with the *nu'u* and the transformation in the lives of the individual members of the *aiga*. As such, I aspire to help build their capacity and to improve their level of awareness to be able to deal with many of today's social issues. It is a personal goal to support the community to influence attitudinal, mentality and/or behavioural changes, necessary for them to realize any positive transformation in their lives.

As an individual, I alone cannot change the whole world, but I believe in the power of unity that together, each and every one of us can contribute towards making this world a better place today, for a safer tomorrow. I am further inspired to make this work more meaningful and practical for the Church's 'save and set free' mission, specifically the CCCS, through playing an active role in the elimination of violence against women.

While the church plays a leading role in saving and setting people free from sin, this role can also be translated to include, saving and setting women free from slavery to violence; and this can form part of the priorities for the CCCS pastoral work.

## **What is Violence? And what is Violence against Women?**

According to Katerina Teaiwa, we do not need a dictionary to understand violence, because it simply means destruction, pain, harm, and suffering.<sup>1</sup> This means that violence is an inappropriate act of someone toward one another and that act could harm that person either physically, psychologically or spiritually.

The former Head of State of the Independent State of Samoa, a former Prime Minister of Samoa, and a current head of his *aiga*, Tuiatua Tupua Tamasese Efi, agrees and also believes that violence causes psychological, emotional, spiritual, and physical disruption, disorder, and disharmony to the multiple dimensions of wellbeing within *aiga*. Acts of violence are the dangerous violations of *vātapuia*. The term, *ua soli le vātapuia* details the desecration of sacred relationships, the trampling of sacred space. Violence and the consequential violations of *vātapuia* remove perpetrators, victims, and their ‘*āiga*’ from the continuum of wellbeing.<sup>2</sup> Tuiatua is a caring leader who also cared about his Samoan culture. He emphasised the importance of having peace within community by introducing harmonious interrelationship with one another.

The acts of violence by a husband against his wife sets in motion a chain of relational violations. Violations of *vātapuia* occurred between husband and wife, and between parents and their children. *Feagaiga* relationships between the husband and his sisters; the wife and her brothers are affected as are *vātapuia* between the husband and his parents, and his wife’s parents. The husband’s action is a disrespect to his wife’s genealogy, his own genealogy, and the genealogy of their descendants through their children. Similarly, acts of violence by children against parents and grandparents; and

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<sup>1</sup> Katerina Teaiwa, “Violence within and against the Pacific” in *Cultural Shaping of Violence: Victimization, Escalation, Response*, ed. Myrdene Anderson (Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2004) p.g 193.

<sup>2</sup>TuiAtua Tupua TamaseseEfi, 2004, p.g 8).

adults against children are equally serious violations of *vātapuia*. The process for bringing about reconciliation or redress in *fa'a-Sāmoa* is *fa'aleleiga*.<sup>3</sup>

Pamela Cooper-White in her book called; ‘The Cry of Tamar: Violence against Women and the Church’s Response’, outlines Violence against Women through two themes that assist to identify and examine the nature of violence against women. They are relationality and power.<sup>4</sup> Cooper - White believes that it is through objectification, that we can come to an understanding of violence towards and against women through human relationality. Like Tamar who extended care and who in return, received neither love nor the respect she deserves. However, she was branded as a property, as an object of possession that was exchanged between many hands; was treated poorly and unfairly and ultimately, discarded as a used object or thing.<sup>5</sup> This human relationality and objectification by White is very familiar to what Tuiatua stating and emphasizing as the violation of the *va-tapuia* in the *faa-Samoa*. All these human relationality, objectification and violation of the *va-tapuia* have shown no respect at all for our women and girls.

Power is a huge and complex subject, and any brief discussion will necessarily be partial. Nevertheless, some theological and ethical groundwork concerning the subject of power must be set down before an examination of the question of violence can be meaningfully undertaken. This will lead, in turn, to some suggestions of alternative understandings of power and non-abusive behaviour as a basis for community that is built on accountability, relationality, and care.

Violence against women in general, is a very broad topic which deserves a more in-depth study that is beyond the scope of this paper. In previous studies and reports, it is usually the women who are the victims of violence with the men being the

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<sup>3</sup>TuiAtua Tupua TamaseseEfi, 2004, p.g 8).

<sup>4</sup> Pamela Cooper – White; “The cry of Tamar, Violence against women and the Church’s Response, second edition”, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 2012. p.g 41.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.g 42.

perpetrators.<sup>6</sup> For study purposes, this research will focus on a specific group of women who have being abused in an intimate relationship by their husbands (married), or partners (not married); commonly known as Intimate Partner Violence (hereafter refer to as IPV).

In addition, for the purposes of this research, I am using the W.H.O's definition of IPV as, "any behaviour within a present or former intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological, or sexual harm".<sup>7</sup> The forms of behaviour usually considered as part of IPV include *physical abuse* (e.g. smacking, hitting, kicking and beating), *emotional abuse*, (eg; humiliation, intimidation) and *sexual abuse*.

### **Statistics**

The horrendous state of Violence against women has become a serious issue within our *aiga* and *nu'u* in both rural and urban settings. Not a week goes by without reports / news of women and girls falling victim to such abuse, giving rise to grave concerns about their safety within the institutions of *aiga* and *nu'u* where they are supposed to be safe.

The most recent study conducted by The World Health Organisation (W.H.O) Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence published in 2003 was based on information gained from interviewing 1640 women. The results of the study were quite damning as they found that at least 41% of women had experienced physical abuse and 20% of them had undergone sexual abuse.<sup>8</sup> But an even shocking discovery was the fact that 86% of the physically abused women actually did not seek help because they thought that such abuse was 'normal', or not serious enough for them to receive

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<sup>6</sup>Although there are men who also suffer abused by women, but the percentage is low.

<sup>7</sup>World Health Organization. (2020). Retrieved from; [http://www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/publication/violence/989241564007](http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/publication/violence/989241564007) eng.pdf.

<sup>8</sup> WHO Report Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence published in 2003.

help. Included in the same report by the WHO was a list of the most common reasons for domestic violence to occur, including:

1. Lower levels of education;
2. Witnessing family violence;
3. Harmful use of alcohol;
4. Harmful masculine behaviours including having multiple partners or attitudes that condone violence;
5. Community norms that privilege or ascribe higher status to men and lower status of women.

Furthermore, the National Inquiry into Family Violence Report published by the Samoa Office of the Ombudsman or National Human Rights Institute (NHRI) in 2017, found that 86% of women said they had been kicked or punched, slapped, or harmed, by the use of a hard object (rock, stick, tree trunk, hose etc.) by their husband or partner.<sup>9</sup> The latest statistics by the NHRI brought home the fact that Violence, especially violence against women and girls, is at an alarming high.

The current global health crisis brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic has made the reality of Domestic violence even worse, as the stress of lockdown and financial hardships contributed to increased violence within the homes. As per the Spotlight Initiative in Samoa Report during Quarter 1 of 2020, “Domestic violence increased by 20% within 2 months as reported by one of the Spotlight Initiative partners, Samoa Victim Support Group, from 9 cases in the same period in 2019 to 46 cases during the lockdown period March to May 2020”.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The Samoa National Inquiry into Family Violence Report published by the Samoa Office of the Ombudsman or National Human Rights Institute (NHRI) in 2017.

<sup>10</sup> Samoa Victim Support Group (SVSG) one of the Spotlight Initiative partnership.

## Research Question

As a Case Manager with SVSG, my daily work involved a direct interface with the victims of violence (usually women and girls), through case management and referrals to the relevant authorities such as the Police for investigation, and to the Courts for justice and the application for Interim Protection Orders. At the same time, my role -assisted with restorative justice through supporting the rehabilitative counselling program for perpetrators of violence referred from the Family Court. Being positioned at the crossroads of supporting both the victims and the perpetrators of violence, I was committed to finding answers to the central question that is at the heart of this research.

How can the Congregational Christian Church Samoa (hereafter CCCS) pastoral perspective strengthen its pastoral role, and advocate for the elimination of violence against women in Samoa? Answering the ‘How’ question will open the discussion on the existing barriers to eliminating violence against women and girls. This Research Framework can be used as a Discussion Paper in promoting faith-based interventions by the Church in the community, to eliminate violence against women and girls, while consideration is still given to its integration into the formulation of CCCS policies and action plans.

This research also helps our communities to take ownership of violence against women within their own community, and encourage them to come up with the most relevant and practical solutions. Violence is everyone’s business, as such; eliminating violence should be a community approach, spearheaded by none other than the *Alii ma Faipule*, Churches leaders, village leaders and *Tamaitai*. As one of the interviewees stated; “no one better understands what is going on within the community than those who live within that community”.<sup>11</sup> This research is not only assisting the CCCS, but also

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<sup>11</sup> Tuiloma Lemalu Sina Retzlaff – as interviewed on 15 March 2021.

other churches, Government ministries, service providers such as Non-Government Organisations (NGO) here in Samoa and abroad, in their efforts to combat violence against women. As one of the themes from the Spotlight Initiative to Eliminate Violence against women and girls' states,

“We do not need to look far to find solutions, the answers have always been with us, we can start with pride in our Samoa culture, have pride in our women and girls, and faith in our people to heal our country from violence against women and girls.”<sup>12</sup>

To find the answers to the Research question, I will explore Violence against women from a Pastoral perspective of the CCCS.

## **Chapters Outline**

Chapter 1 looks at the “*Tafatolu* Model” as a tool to acquire qualitative informations regarding the issue of Violence against women. This information will be collected and analysed in order to propose ways for the CCCS to eliminate violence against women not only within the Faleata West Sub District but also in Samoa.

Chapter 2 presents the background information on Violence against women in Samoa. It will include a case study comprised of its analysis; looking at those involved, their background and the causes of violence. There will also be discussion around interviews conducted with victims and perpetrators of Violence against women, Service providers, experts on culture and Champions of Violence against women.

Chapter 3 looks at the CCCS's current stance in relations to Violence against women. The final part of this chapter includes some theological discussions pertaining to Violence against women. These theological discussions will look at the role of the Church, and how it will help to eliminate Violence against women in Samoa.

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<sup>12</sup>The Spotlight Initiative – is a global, multi-year partnership between the European Union and the United Nations to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.

# CHAPTER 1: METHODOLOGY AND QUALITATIVE INFORMATION

## 1.0. Introduction

In this chapter, we will look at the ‘*Tafatolu* Methodological Framework’ and how it works in order to get qualitative information for this paper. The reviews will provide resources in which a discussion and analysis of the qualitative information collected from the CCCS ministers from the *Faleata West* Sub- District (FWSD) in Samoa can be assessed. The next chapter will assess other collected data from target groups such as the services providers, cultural experts, the victims as well as the perpetrators.

## 1.1 Methodology

The approach used throughout this paper is the ‘*Tafatolu* (three-sides) Methodological Framework Model. The Model looks at three sides of the triangular framework and how it works together to propose ways to assist the CCCS with addressing violence against women.

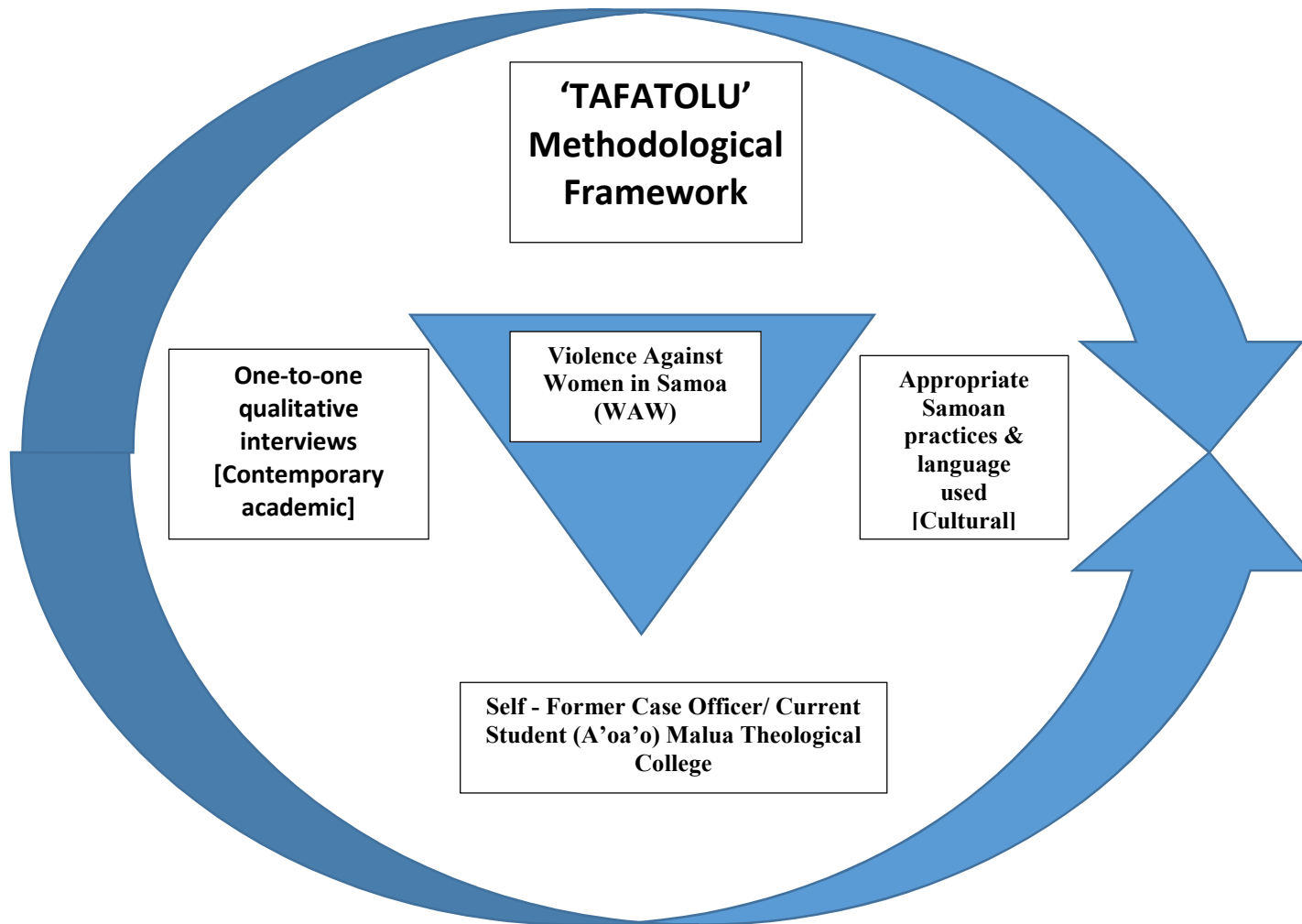
This Framework is presented as an upside down triangle with each sides representing three areas considered as valuable to any research – a contemporary academic approach to research, a cultural approach, and the self that represents the researcher’s perspectives and positioning within the project.<sup>13</sup> All the three sides of the triangle contribute and work together in order to come up with a possible solution to the issue highlighted in the middle. The arrows that are circling the *Tafatolu* Framework simplifies and represents the work of the Church that oversees the whole process. The Church also symbolises God’s love and care towards His people.

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<sup>13</sup>Alesana, Pala’amo. *Fetu’utu’una’i le va Navigating relational space: An exploration of pastoral counselling practices for Samoans*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation), Massey University, Albany, NewZealand)2007. Retrieved from <https://mro.massey.ac.nz>.

This Qualitative research method is parallel to how Samoans share their knowledge and understandings of the world around them.

Figure 1. *Tafatolu* (three- sides) Methodological Framework  
(Source: Rev. Dr. Alesana Palaamo)



In particular, qualitative research methods involve the collection, analysis, and presentation of narrative information.<sup>14</sup>In this research paper, personal interviews have been conducted in order to obtain qualitative information from the target groups such as the Church Ministers and wives, the perpetrators and victims of violence against women, the service providers and cultural experts or Samoan high chiefs. An analysis of the

<sup>14</sup> C.Teddlie, &A. Tashakkori, *Foundations of mixed methods research: Integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches in the social and behavioural sciences*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications. 2009.

responses to the interview questions is an indication of the understanding of the world on the issue, through this target group.

According to McLeod, Qualitative research is a process of careful, rigorous inquiry into aspects of the social world. It produces formal statements or conceptual frameworks that provide new ways of understanding the world, and therefore comprises knowledge that is practically useful for those who work with issues around learning and adjustment to the pressures and demands of the social world.<sup>15</sup> A detailed discussion of the *Tafatolu* Methodological Framework will be elaborated on in Chapter 3.

## 1.2 Qualitative Information

The other side of the *Tafatolu* Model are the information and Data that were collected from the targeted group who were invited to participate in the Research, namely, the current CCCS *faiifeau* and *faletua* (*church ministers' wives*) from *Faleata* West Sub-District or *Pulega*. As stated earlier, this research not only targeted the CCCS *faiifeau* but will also include the views from some of the Service Providers, Victims as well as Perpetrators of violence against women, Cultural Experts and Champions of Violence against women. The collection of Data involved in-depth interviews; that will be discussed, analysed, and interpreted in the later Chapters.

According to the SVSG Casework Database 2005-2020 and some responses to interviews with service providers, it has been recorded that *Faleata* West Sub-District is by far, one of the areas with the highest rate of violence, due to several factors. Some of these factors include alcohol, financial distress and community instability due to the

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<sup>15</sup> J. McLeod, *Qualitative research in counselling and psychotherapy*. London, United Kingdom: SagePublications,2001, p.g 3.

relocation of people from the rural areas to the Faleata West Sub-District for school, for employment, or to reside temporarily following their being banished from the village.<sup>16</sup>

There are nine (9) parishes in the *Faleata* West Sub-District of the CCCS with nine *faiifeau* who are responsible for overseeing these parishes under the supervision and guidance of the Faleata West Sub-Districts *Toeaina* also known as the Pulega's Elder.<sup>17</sup> Five (5) *faiifeau* and two (2) *faletua* or pastor's wives were selected and interviewed. They will remain anonymous as per their request. However, a consent letter (attached and marked as Appendix A) was signed by all the interviewees, for the information to be used in this paper.<sup>18</sup> It must be noted that two of the five *faiifeau* were interviewed with their *faletua*.

Four (4) interviews were conducted with Perpetrators of violence against women and girls; four (4) with Victims or Survivors of violence against women and girls and two (2) with representatives from service providers. Two (2) Samoan cultural experts were also interviewed to gauge their understanding of how the issue of Violence against women and girls in Samoa relates to the proverb, "*E fofō e le Alamea le Alamea*". In total, there were nineteen 19 interviews conducted for the research.

All the Qualitative questions used for interviews are attached as marked at the end of this paper. While the interview questions guided the discussions, probing questions were also utilised to gain clarity on important points that the respondents shared.

### **1.3 Cultural Approach – The Samoan metaphorical expression; "*Fofō Alamea*" or "*E fofō e le Alamea le Alamea*"**

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<sup>16</sup>SVSG Database 2005 – 2020 and interviews with SVSG and Ministry of Police representatives.

<sup>17</sup> The Elder or *Toeaina* is responsible for each Sub-District known as *Pulega*. There is another superior Elder known as *Toeaina Faatonu* that looks after the whole District including Sub-Districts of the CCCS.

<sup>18</sup> All consent letters with the author.

On the other side of the *Tafatolu* Model there is Cultural Approach. This is where an appropriate Samoan practices and languages can be used and exercised in order to give more light into the issues regarding strategies and remedies to overcome whatever issues arise within the community. Thus the metaphorical expression; '*e fofo e le alamea le alamea*' comes in.

*Alamea* is a type of starfish found in Samoa and the Pacific Ocean, known in English as the Crown of Thorns Starfish. The *Alamea's* outer skin that face upwards is decorated with long poisonous spikes. This side is also known as the thorny side, whereas the downward side is known as the spongy side. It is a very dangerous species found in the sea, and fishermen as well as people going for a swim, are aware of this hence they are careful not to step on the long poisonous spikes of the *Alamea*.

Growing up in Samoa, I remember the time I was stung by the *Alamea's* venom once when we went out fishing with my cousins and some friends. It was one of the most painful experiences I have ever felt. I accidentally stepped on the *Alamea's* thorny side and I got stung. I couldn't put my injured leg down and I could see there was a big thorny hole underneath my injured foot. It was at this time that I learnt my injured foot could only be cured by the *Alamea* itself. My friends brought the *Alamea* that stung me, turned the spongy-side up and I stepped on it again. Amazingly it worked and I was cured.

The process with the *Alamea* may sound like a quick fix, but it is not. This is due mainly to the fact that the healing process will take some time to be fully recovered. With regards to the *Alamea*, while the process of flipping the *Alamea* on its spongy side up enabled the injured foot to be drained of the poisonous venom, the infection remains for a while. However, if the flipping process would not have happened, then the injury and the infection would remain for a while, or even worse.

#### **1.4 What is the *Alamea* when we talk about Violence against women?**

The Samoan metaphorical expression “*E fofō e le Alamea le Alamea*”, is usually referred to an issue that may have ‘stung’ the relationship among the people within an *aiga* or *nu’u*. The Samoan saying as I experienced as a child, explicitly describes the process when one steps on the *Alamea* and is stung by its venom, and where the immediate relief is to ‘flip’ the *Alamea* over and step on it again, to allow the suction cups under it to suck the poison from the wounds.

The Samoan saying often quoted in this context is: “*E fofō e le Alamea le Alamea*” (the remedy for the toxic sting of the Crown of Thorns starfish is the Crown of Thorns starfish itself)<sup>19</sup>. The Samoan proverb can be translated to mean that the solution can be found within the problem, but it does not mean that the solution and the problem are the same. Obviously, they are not. Nobody stands on the thorns and then heals themselves by standing on the thorns again. The person needs to physically flip the *Alamea*, to activate its healing properties.

Applying the *alamea* concept to the issues affecting a community, *aiga* and *nuu*, we can interpret it to mean that solutions for issues affecting a community can be found within that same community.

“In some instances, it is the village council of chiefs, the church minister or the parents of the victims (or any combination of these members), who can be complicit in concealing sexual crimes,” stated one participant. The shame and stigma such heinous acts can bring to the families and villages of both the victim and the offender can be a strong deterrent to dealing with the crime appropriately.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Galumalemana Steven Percival, Samoa Observer 03/03/2016

<sup>20</sup>Ibid

In the issue of Violence against women in the Samoan context, whatever can be seen as the *Alamea* that has stung our families and communities with the increased in Violence against women, the cure or the solution for the problem is the *Alamea* itself. In other words, we need to ‘flip’ the *Alamea*, in the case of this research, our religious beliefs, on its ‘spongy-side’ so that it can effectively draw out the venom that had initially caused the injury. Ultimately, this process can also be extended to show that for issues originating and affecting a particular community, solutions can also be found within that same community.<sup>21</sup>

### 1.5 Summary

The *Tafatolu* Methodological Framework provides a practical approach to the issue of VaW while the Samoan metaphorical expression; “*e fofo e le alamea le alamea*” gives the owners of the responsibility to eliminating violence in the community, to the community itself.

My self-experiences and my background not only as a former Samoan chief title holder, a fisherman, a case officer, case manager and a current theological student from the Faleata West Sub District are all contributed and could influence the outcome of this paper with the analysis and discussion.

All this information represents the whole community, such as the voice of the Church ministers and their wives who represent the church whereas the cultural experts represent the *matais* or chiefs within families and villages. The service providers represent the government and Non-government organisations, whereas the victims voice the oppressed, and perpetrators represent those who performed this violence against women. Thus, *Tafatolu* Approach is the Wholistic approach.

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<sup>21</sup>Fa’alili-Fidow, J., E. Moselen, S. Denny, R. Dixon, T. Teevale, A. Ikihele and T. Clark. “Youth’12 overview - The health and wellbeing of secondary school students in New Zealand: Pacific young people.” (2016).

## **CHAPTER 2: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN THE SAMOAN CONTEXT**

### **2. 0 Introduction**

This Chapter is divided into two sections. The first section looks at one example of many cases of Violence against women within the Samoan context. Specifically, this case will be analyzed in all its aspects including who are involved; the victims, the offenders or the perpetrators, the history of violence, the interventions involved, and what were the root causes and contributing factors to the violence. The outcome of this case will also be discussed. The main reason why this case has been highlighted, is firstly, to give a clear overview of the issue of Violence against women in Samoa; and secondly, to highlight the issue of Violence against women with questions that need to be addressed, in order to eliminate such violent acts.

The second section of this Chapter looks at the Interview Analysis. The interview analysis as stated in Chapter 1 of this paper looks at the source of the Qualitative information as the selected interviewee. The analysis will be divided into different categories: first, the viewpoint from the church ministers and wives from the FWSD, combined with the viewpoint of the Services providers and cultural experts on the issue of VaW. The viewpoint includes causes and remedies. The second viewpoint is that of the victims and offenders or perpetrators.

### **2.1 Cases of Violence against Women in the Samoan context**

Violence against women is one of the most widespread violations of human rights worldwide, and Samoa is no exception. Women are usually referred to as the vulnerable members of the community; the weaker gender when it comes to violence. For Samoa, Violence against women is on the rise despite the efforts of government ministries, in partnership with international and regional organizations, the private sector, non-

governmental organizations, civil society organizations, faith-based organizations and the media. In short, there are numerous strategies being implemented both locally and internationally, but the problem continues to harm, to injure and to kill women being affected. It gives rise to the question: Are we addressing the fundamental reason (s) behind violence against women in Samoa?

It is well researched, reported and talked about that women indeed experienced more violence than men. Such violence is not only physical, but also mental and emotional. It takes place within their own *aiga*, and *nu'u*, which are places where safety, warmth, belonging, and acceptance are supposed to be the norm. So, knowing this fact, Violence against women is everyone's business. This is because violence can be used against anyone, at any age, in any level, whether poor or rich, uneducated, or well educated, and it could happen to any of us one way or another. Being everyone's business also means that there needs to be an intentional and serious commitment by all to change and transform people's mindsets, attitudes, specifically men's, and their behaviour towards women.

In the following section, is one of the many documented cases used exclusively in this thesis to better understand the reasons behind VaW. What causes VAW? What triggers VAW? What are the contributing factors to VAW? Again, it cannot be understated, that this case is only one of the many cases that were reported to either the SVSG or the Ministry of Police. This case will help us ascertain a general overview of VaW in the Samoan context, and will be further elaborated on and discussed throughout this thesis.

## 2.2 Case Study 1: When a Husband Says, “It Was Just One Slap on the Cheek”<sup>22</sup>

An abusive father of 50 years of age was living with his wife and their four children at her village on the South-Eastern side of Upolu. Their eldest daughter was 18 and their two sons, were 15 and 12 at the time, and their youngest daughter was only 10.

According to the villagers and the family’s neighbours, the husband was well known for beating his wife, “*E fasi lava i aso uma*” (The wife is beaten every day). On the 24th of July 2019, the husband acted violently toward his wife for the last time. The children came home from school to find their parents arguing. The wife went to the back of the house to peel bananas. One of the children joined to help her. The husband walked in and out of the house irritated, telling his wife to stop complaining. She responded by saying that she is not complaining. He then slaps her on the cheek causing her to fall on a rock-strewn terrain. She lies still. Unconscious on the ground. Snoring. Blood coming from her mouth. She was admitted to a nearby District Hospital unconscious. She was eventually transferred to the National Hospital, where she died five days later.

According to the Post-mortem Report, the wife’s injuries included signs of “Blunt force trauma” to the head which resulted in a subdural hematoma. There was a bruise at the back of her head. There was bruising on her right arm. There was bruising on her left arm. There was bruising to the front and the back of her torso. The Coroner’s Report described the extensive amount of bruising of the wife’s body, and yet the husband was charged, convicted and sentenced for what can be described as a ‘slap on the cheek.

The Court Justice said;

*“I have carefully reviewed all the authorities in the prosecution’s sentencing memorandum; I accept that it was never your intention to cause the death of your wife. This was an unfortunate incident and that the single slap is at the lowest end of the scale compared to other cases of manslaughter...But*

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<sup>22</sup>Published on Samoa Global News; January 31, 2021

*contrary to other cases, this was an offending in a domestic relationship. It occurred in your home and in the presence of your children. In addition, this is not the first time you have come before the Court charged with an act of violence against your wife and the Court must continue to send out a strong deterrent message against all forms of domestic violence especially when the consequences are significantly serious. The Court cannot also overlook the loss of life and gravity of the charge manslaughter.<sup>23</sup>*

The husband was convicted three years prior, for the very same offence – assaulting his wife. But now after causing the death of his wife, he was sentenced to two years and four months in jail.

## **2.3 Case Analysis**

The central question for this research is essentially, “Why does Violence against women in Samoa continue to rise, despite the many interventions etc?”

It is clear from the highlighted case, that there was a failure to seek and understand the core causes of VaW and girls. Just like in physical health and medicine, a sick person cannot be completely healed until their illness and the cause of it is correctly diagnosed, so too with VaW. Until we correctly identify, acknowledge, accept, and then treat the core causative factor behind it, we cannot even begin the healing process.

I have used the above case study presented; **Case 1** to better understand violence against women and the underlying systems that are keeping gender-based violence in place. Key facts from **Case 1** are as follows: -

1. The husband was well known for beating up the wife.
2. He had been convicted three year’s prior for the same offence.
3. Three years later he killed her.

For Domestic violence to end, men or husbands (who are the majority of the perpetrators) have to be of the mind-set, that his wife is not his property, that he has no

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<sup>23</sup> Justice Fepuleai Aneperosa Roma - Samoa Supreme Court Judge

right to beat her, because in essence, she is his equal. For example, if another woman or another man, was ‘complaining’ and arguing with the husband in question, no matter how irritated he would get, it would have to be some extreme circumstances in which he would go over and beat up that other man or woman.

However, when it comes to his wife, that reluctance to beat her up was non-existent, because in his view, she was his property, to be seen as less than him, and therefore in his mind, he had every right to beat her up whenever he pleases. On the other hand, if he viewed her as equal to him, he would hold back on using violence against her, no matter the circumstances.

In many ways, this is the underlying challenge facing Samoan society, especially if the interpretations of the Samoan hierarchical culture and the Bible appear to support the superiority of men over women.

This is similar to the view of the *Fa’a-Samoa*, that men are more important and higher than women. The expression of these one-sided and bigoted views which holds that women are in any way ‘less’ than men, is arguably, the single most important factor as to why VaW continue to rise unabated.

What was also clear in this case, was that the village, and the neighbours also knew what was going on, but no one thought it necessary to intervene or to report the repeated incidents to the Police, Village Council or *Fono o le Nu’u*, *Faifeau* or Church Minister for further assistance. Such a societal attitude is influenced by several factors:

1. Village/neighbours feeling that the wife-beating was a private matter between the husband and wife and so it was not their place to report or intervene; or
2. Village/neighbours feeling that the wife beating was not really a serious matter that warranted reporting to Police, or *Fono*, etc.

3. Village/neighbours feeling that the man beating his wife was not wrong, it was the right or normal thing to do.

In any event, what is clear from the above societal attitudes, is the critical role that mind-sets and beliefs have in shaping the behaviour of men who continue to perpetuate and use violence against women. And similarly, it is mind-sets and beliefs that is influencing the type of responses and actions people take towards cases of VaW that occur around them. This reality can also be extended to the Judge, who presided over the case. Their willingness to accept the Defendant's 'word' that he did not intend to cause his wife's death and that it was a single 'slap', was contrary to the physical evidence. In this instance, it is difficult to explain such an attitude, only to assume here that a man's word appears to have greater value and integrity than a woman's life!

The fact that the man was convicted for the same offence before he went on to reoffend highlighted the challenges with our current Justice System, which primarily focuses on a Punitive rather than a Therapeutic approach, i.e. recognising that the perpetrator has a problem that needs to be treated/addressed through understanding and respect rather than blaming and shaming.

These processes however require proper design, resourcing and qualified professionals who can work with the perpetrators and their families towards changed beliefs and behaviours. Such a change in approach also requires serious investment in resources which is critical to delivering quality programmes aimed at rehabilitation.

## **2.4 Interviews Analysis**

For this analysis, I have chosen to collate the interviews into three separate categories and summarise the key points outlined to find common grounds, if any, across the board for all these interviews. To keep the reporting true and accurate, I will

endeavour to list all the points made in each separate interview within their own respective groupings. However, due to the constraints of the research, I will condense these to three main points.

In this section, I will use the analogy of the ‘Ambulance at the bottom of the cliff’, whereby the issue is only addressed ‘after’ the incident has occurred, meaning, that the first views given are by the *faiifeau* and Cultural experts, the people outside of the problem, those that have insight because of their added value to understanding the problem from an outside-inwards view; but not the perpetrators or the victims. This will be presented as “The Service Provider’s Viewpoint”, through their experience in the cultural, political, and religious spectrums.

The second viewpoint will be from those ‘Atop of the cliff’. In this case, the perpetrators own insight is vital to gauge an understanding as to why they have committed violence against women. We shall hear directly of the surface problems that occurred in which violence became an answer.

Lastly, we shall hear from the victims themselves, and some of the problems they have faced, to gain an understanding as to why this particular problem continues to occur.

## **2.5 The Service Provider’s Viewpoint**

From this collative work, I have summarised the reports into two sections: - Causes and Remedies. Causes relate to exactly what the combined viewpoint is from the *faiifeau*, Government Ministry, NGO, and Cultural Experts in relation to what they believe are the causes of this specific type of violence. Remedies are the suggestions from these groupings as to how the problem of Violence towards women, in their own respective viewpoint, should be handled or rectified. I note that all these groupings have collectively agreed on two things. First, that violence is an act that they vehemently oppose, and two,

that they support the need for change and the social services needed to combat this problem.

## 2.6 Causes

From a very basic religious perspective, violence itself can be understood as being spurred on by the Devil. In essence, it is a channel in which evil encroaches upon the mindset of Human Beings to turn them from the light of God and towards their own Human desires. This is fueled by parishioners not attending Church or other programs within the church, which should foster a more moralistic and stable environment between all people regardless of gender.

Alcohol and Drug abuse is another cause raised, as this inhibits self-control and creates an environment in which restraint and self-composure is literally thrown out the window, and the user becomes incapacitated to make rational and conscious decisions.

This follows onto the sociological problems which are under-pinned by the traditional religious teachings and traditional and cultural customs, which are embedded in not only the society as a whole, but in the Samoan psyche, whereby the religious is intertwined with the cultural. The religious teachings that the Husband is the Head of the household, meaning that all decisions are decided solely by the Father/Husband figurehead. Also, that their word is law and must be obeyed. This is further exacerbated by the traditional cultural customs whereby the Hierarchical system which orders society is dominantly Patriarchal leadership.

However, the emphasis on the cultural and religious aspects are two-fold, as they are construed by those causing harm in the negative aspect, and used by the positive aspect in respect that the 'ideology' of *fa'aaloalo* has been lost through the westernised culture. Also mentioned is the *feagaiga* between brother and sister, or between male and female, has eroded over time.

Yet simplified equations of anger issues, and the inability to *fa'asoa* or to share information amongst one another for fear of shame and ineptitude on such a matter as violence, can often be a trigger to these problems surfacing. The lack of support and services in this paradigm of violence, escalates this problem of physical harm, as a perpetrator has no advice or even support to turn to, for help.

## 2.7 Remedies

It is worth noting that the reporting advice from this grouping have all mentioned that the issue at the heart of this research does not need or require outside assistance, but that this is definitely a problem where solutions can be sought and dealt with on an 'in-house' basis. The main two categories within this section, as clearly set out in the reporting process, is also two-fold. They seem to either reflect a wider understanding of Cultural practices or Spiritual guidance.

Within Spiritual guidance, the solutions vary from counselling with prayer and a message embodied and strengthened within the sermon. They see the role of the *faiifeau* as paramount to the correcting of this problem of violence. The *faiifeau* must have an input into the rehabilitation and the re-conditioning of both the perpetrator and the victim. In some cases, the role of the *faletua* is highlighted as an avenue in which women victims, would be readily and easily reassured to speak up about the problem, or speak with another woman (in this case the *faletua*) about issues surrounding harm and violence. The role of the Church as a whole, is vital. To not only provide programmes which can create stable and healthy *aiga*, but also be an opportunity for those with problems, physical and spiritual, to '*fa'asoa*' to share problems and to seek advice in a safe and acceptable environment.

From a cultural perspective, there have been calls to repair the '*vātapuia*' the scared space between one person and another. The space whereby respect is utmost vital to a harmonious and balanced society. The calls for this relational space between male and females, must be re-instated and upheld, for values like love, peace and respect are seen to provide stability within any setting. This ideal underpins the value of *fa'aaloalo* in which respect must be present in any human interactions regardless of gender. The current erosion of this pivotal value within Samoan society has become rapidly replaced with the westernized culture and ideals, whereby the "self" or the "I" ideology replaces the *aiga* dynamic or village *nu'u* culture that has spanned generations from the very origins of Samoan society. A reset of this value, in essence, a commitment for it to be re-embedded into Samoan society as a whole and individually, is seen as an important step, towards improving and facilitating, remedies towards VaW.

## **2.8 Perpetrator's Viewpoint**

Again, the collative reporting process has allowed for the voices of the perpetrators of violence against women to be heard, even though they themselves have committed this offence. In hindsight, the perpetrators have all acknowledged that the problem they have had is with being the aggressor in the relationship and causing harm to women.

Yet in these cases, all violence began with an argument, where the perpetrators have insisted they started because either the woman did something, or did not do something. Though they committed the offense, the defense seems to start off with it being the woman's fault. There maybe a level of bias in this situation, but due to the nature of the reporting, I must collate the evidence as given directly by the perpetrators. All four perpetrators were arrested by the Police and judged by the law and in some cases, were also punished by their respective local village councils. However, their own

remedies centre around self-control of their own emotions, combined with learning and practicing acts and thoughts of love, to guide them in their rehabilitation. They also touch upon the re-iteration of *fa'aaloalo* in their lives so that their *aiga* can live amicably and pleasantly, and thus improving their overall behaviour and lifestyles which will influence their Church and *nu'u* life, as well as Samoan society.

## **2.9 Victim's Viewpoint**

All the victims have expressed their dismay to being in relationships which have ended in physical harm, and the common factor and/or cause is understood to be the man's understanding that men are superior to women, and that women being inferior, must submit to the man's rules and instructions wholeheartedly.

Another point raised was how they believed they were perceived and subsequently treated. They believed that they were perceived as objects of possession by the men. Almost to the point, that they were treated like objects rather than as human beings within the *aiga* or marriage.

Yet the same issues of alcohol and drug abuse, the absence of self-control of one's emotions of anger re-surfaced as triggers to physical harm.

Their remedies as victims follow the same equation that has been echoed throughout the other groupings, where issues around more support and counselling, and avenues in which these problems can be talked about and shared and not hidden behind emotions of shame and humiliation.

The importance of mutual respect that must be shared and shown both ways between men and women, for stability in not only *aiga* situations, but also, that such an environment and way of life can be harnessed in the community.

## 2.10 Summary

The idea of chapter 2 is to look at the background of VaW within the Samoa context in order to identify the causes of VaW and at the same time, look at remedies to assist the CCCS in addressing this issue. The analysis of the Case Study 1 together with the Qualitative information from the interviews that have been conducted, should assist in guiding the CCCS towards assessing a suitable approach to help address VaW.

The analysis of the Case study that is firstly given in this chapter clearly highlighted one of the most common responses of the Samoans when it comes to VaW. It is our societal attitude of SILENCE towards the issue, and it seems like no one cares; and paints a picture of an ununified community that is not working collaboratively together, as one love in Christ. It is our societal behaviour of MINDING our own business without interfering with that of others. It is our societal mentality of NORMS that ascribe higher status to men and lower status to women.

It is therefore apparent that there is a great gap in attitude, behaviour and mentality within our community, towards addressing VaW. This is where the cultural approach highlighted by the Samoan metaphorical expression; *'e fofo e le alamea le alamea'*, should work in parallel with the Church, to fill this gap.

In doing this, the Church should take the lead and revive our people's love and respect for one another. Revive the *va-tapuia* and *faaaloalo*.

Samoans are known as religious and Christian people where love and respect defines a Samoan family. "Samoa is not a country it is just a one big family where everyone should live in a collective relationship with one another". Just as Tuiatua states;

*"I am not an individual; I am an integral part of the cosmos. I share divinity with my ancestors, the land, the seas and the skies. I am not an individual, because I share my tofi (an inheritance) with my family, my village and my*

*nation. I belong to my family and my family belongs to me. I belong to my village and my village belongs to me. I belong to my nation and my nation belongs to me. This is the essence of my belonging".<sup>24</sup>*

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<sup>24</sup>TuiAtua, T. T. T. E. (2003). In search of meaning, nuance and metaphor in social policy. *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, (20), 2003, p.g 49-63.

## **CHAPTER 3: THE CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH SAMOA AND THE THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSION**

### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter looks at the CCCS's current stance in relations to VaW. It will include some theological discussions pertaining to VaW and ends with a look at some positive considerations as a way forward for the CCCS in addressing VaW in Samoa.

### **3.1 The CCCS Church context in Samoa**

The Church is at the heart of every native Samoan's way of life. It is the pillar by which our Christian values and cultural beliefs are tailored towards and/or intertwined; and one which underpins the foundation of Samoa as a nation, 'founded on God.'

Samoan people love the Church. We have learnt of the greatest commandment that you are to 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is translated to serving the Church.

There is a common Samoan saying: "*E vaavaalua le Lotu ma le Aganuu, e mamalu foi le aganuuna ole Talalelei*". This means that the Church works side by side, or hand in hand with the Samoan culture and traditions. The Church shapes the Samoan culture and traditions.

The CCCS is known to be the first church to be set up in Samoa in the 1830s and was brought from Tahiti under the London Missionary Society or the LMS. According to the missionaries, there was no other country in the Pacific that was easily evangelised and accepted Christianity like the Samoans. Many were converted and became Christians, starting from the heads of the community to the younger members of the community. Other denominations were later set up such as the Methodist Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, and many others.

The arrival of Christianity in Samoa, while it spiritually impacted well on the people, also posed negative influences upon the culture and tradition of Samoa. It is believed the missionaries brought not only changes to the social and political aspects of Samoa, but also changes to the roles and responsibilities of men and women, commonly referred to as the Patriarcal system. This is where men are known as the superior of women, and where men have the power and authority to rule and control the Samoan community.

However, despite many allegations against the negative influences of the missionaries to Samoa, the Church remains an integral part of every Samoans life. Given this reality, the teaching and theology of the Church in addressing VaW should therefore, be influential and impactful.

### **3.2 CCCS or EFKS Church and VAW**

Given the statistics on Samoa's population, as per the 2016 Census<sup>25</sup> indicates a 98% Christian country, with the CCCS membership making up close to 30% of this population, it is fair to say that the CCCS plays a significant role in addressing VaW, as a Church. One of the major contributing factors towards VaW, according to the W.H.O Report mentioned earlier, and most of the interviewees who participated in this research, is the 'harmful use of alcohol.' It is clear in some of the CCCS founding documents, namely the *Tusi Autaumafai* (Chrstian Endeavour) and the *Iloiloga o I'ugafono* (Revision of Special Resolutions) which are regularly revised; that the abuse of alcohol is strictly prohibited for its members.

For example, on the cover page of the *Tusi Autaumafai*, is a testimony of faith that, if taken seriously, can help to prevent violence against women in Samoa.

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<sup>25</sup> Refer Samoa Bureau of Statistics website [www.sbs.gov.ws](http://www.sbs.gov.ws) for more information.

“... Ua ou faamoemoe ile faamalosi mai o Iesu Keriso ia te a’u **O LENEI, UA OU OSIA LA’U FEAGAIGA MA LE ALII**. O le a ou taumafai ona fai mea uma e tusa ma lona finagalo:

Ou te tatalo ia te Ia i aso uma, Ou te faitau i Lana afioga i aso uma, Ou te alo ese i inuga ava i aso uma, Ae le gata i lea, a o mea uma ua ou iloa e tatau ona ou faia, o mea ia ou te taumafai pea i ai i aso uma o lo’u ola...”<sup>26</sup>

Despite the importance of the whole pledge, I wish to highlight an aspect of the pledge that speaks of ‘alcohol consumption’. From my personal experience at my CCCS parish, the Christian Endeavour service is usually conducted in the evening of every Sunday. It is a service where every participant (usually the whole congregation), recites the above pledge at the beginning of the service. One aspect of endeavouring to become (or continue to become) a Christian is to abstain from consuming all forms of ‘alcohol’.

In another document of the *CCCSO le Iloiloga o I’ugafono Tumau* (Revision of Special Resolutions), abuse of alcohol is strongly prohibited. This document follows a resolution by the General Assembly (*Fono Tele*) in Malua on the 11<sup>th</sup> of May 1917. It states that the secretary of the *Fono Tele* should revise the Resolutions of the Church. A Committee from the seven (7) districts in Samoa for the particular aim of revising all Resolutions shall be formed. An important aspect of this document is that it looks at some of the pressing issues of the day and incorporates revisions to some of the regulations that guide its members to address such problems. In May 1951, the fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) revision of this document was carried out, which included four (4) major changes. Amongst these

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<sup>26</sup> I have intentionally used the Samoan (or CCCS??) version of this pledge because the English translation does not mention some of the important aspects that the Samoan version has. Komiti Au Taumafai (Christian Endeavour Committee) Tusi Au Taumafai 2021. Translated as “Trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for strength, I promise Him that I will strive to do whatever He would like to have me do; that I will make it the rule of my life to pray and to read the Bible every day, and to support the work and worship of my own church in every way possible; and that just so far as I know how, throughout my whole life, I will endeavour to lead a Christian life.

changes were an issue that was effecting the ministry of the CCCS in Samoa and overseas. In a two-word instruction, the revision stated that “...getting drunk with alcohol ... is strictly prohibited....” Alcohol is not prohibited but the “getting drunk” or abusing alcohol is strictly prohibited.

Even though the above documents of the CCCS (*Au Taumafai and Iloiloga o Iugafono Tumau*) may not be directly addressing the issue of violence against women, it indirectly highlighted the CCCS stance, that the overconsumption of alcohol has a negative effect on a person, and one such consequence is committing violence, which is usually against women.

By looking at notes regarding ‘**THE REVISION OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH SAMOA 2016**’, there is none or any sort of set document that clearly details or even stated the relationship between the church issues with the community. There is a part of the constitution that states the Ministry of the Church where there are two important aspects;

(1) The Church represents God to humanity in its testimony and loving service to people, and all its words and actions should be a way to draw God’s Holy Love to people.

(2) The Church also represents the world before God through its prayers of confession, intercession and thanksgiving.<sup>27</sup>

### **3.3 Church to eliminate VaW**

This paper has no intention of looking any further to find the solutions to eliminate VaW in Samoa, other than our own Samoan context, our community, our families, our

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<sup>27</sup>Notes regarding the Revision of the Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa 2016; p.g 9,10

villages and in particular, our Church. The answer to the issue of violence lies within our own community.

This is where the cultural approach as per the metaphorical expression comes in: “*e fofo e le alamea le alamea*”. The community consists of our families, our villages, our Church.

This paper believes that the Church should always be at the forefront of the necessary changes to address VaW through community interventions. This is supported by the findings of local Family Safety Studies that the Church plays a significant role in responding to VaW in Samoa.<sup>28</sup> This means that the Church will be an effective agent of change.

While a scholar had asked the questions: Is religion only an innocent victim that is misused by a small number of extremists? Or is religion itself the problem, a force for intolerance and violence around the world?<sup>29</sup> This scholar answered his own question, saying; “In the case of the question regarding the involvement of religion in contemporary public life, the answer is not simply a matter of a particular religion gone bad or of good religion being used by bad people. We know that there are strata of religious imagination that deal with all sides and moods of human existence, the peace and the perversity, the tranquility and the terror. Hence my own answer to the question is: religion is not the problem, but the involvement of religion in public life is often problematic. To me, there is no clearer way of putting it other than as per the scholar’s answer, ‘the involvement of religion in public life is often problematic.’

This view is supported by one religious leader’s perspective as per expressed during an interview as part of this research, where he stated that; “*violence itself can be*

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<sup>28</sup>Ah Sui-Maliko, M. *et al.*, *Church Responses to Gender-Based Violence Against Women in Samoa*. Auckland: New Zealand Institute for Pacific Research, 2019.p.g 46

<sup>29</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer; *The Hedgehog Review*, Critical Reflection on Contemporary Culture; Is Religion the problem? 2004, p.g 4 <https://hedgehogreview.com/>

*understood as being spurred on by the Devil. In essence, it is a channel in which evil encroaches upon the mindset of Human Beings to turn them from the light of God and towards their own Human desires”.*

One local scholar has suggested that, in the face of such temptations, our challenge as Christians is to uphold our Christian values of love, compassion, and justice for all, so that all may have life.<sup>30</sup> I'll say that empathy and social justice are at the heart of this scholar's suggestion, which puts the spotlight on the religion, church and the Christian way of life as essential elements in eliminating VaW.

A Christian response to family violence should be rooted in our Judeo-Christian theology of self. It is only by knowing ourselves as beings created in God's image that we will also understand the consequences of our attitudes and actions toward self, other, creation, and God.<sup>31</sup> This simply means our interrelationship with one another is very important. However, it starts with ourselves to make a change for peace and love to our women and girls. Jesus also empowered boundaries, e.g. Jesus and the Samaritan woman, the adultery woman that was brought before Jesus. Women have also supported Jesus: as hospitality providers, through solidarity in His suffering, faithfulness, and devotion. Jesus had female disciples, Mary and Martha, and many others.

Within the church, religion and Christianity, there is no such belief that men are superior whereas women are inferior. Both men and women are inferior, whereas God is superior.

To address the mentality that men are superior over women, one of the Church ministers who was interviewed for this work suggested a solution, which was supported by one of the Cultural Experts.

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<sup>30</sup>Dr. Mercy Ah Siu – Maliko, *Tatala le tauia leAtua – Rolling out The Fine Mat of the Scripture*, 2019, p. g 45.

<sup>31</sup> Neil, Gunson. (1978). *Messenger of Grace: Evangelical missionaries in the South Seas 1979 - 1860*, Oxford University Press, New York.p.g. 68

*E mafaia ona tineia ma taofia sauaga e faasaga i tina ma tamaitai. E tatau ona i ai le sao tele o le ekalesia ma le aulotu e fesoasoani ai mo latou na a'afia faapea foi latou sa faatinoina nei faiga le alofa. Ia fai ni polokalame faatalanoa (counseling) faapea foi ona tatalo ma talosia e le faifeau ma le ekalesia lenei faafitauli i fonotatalo i lea masina ma lea masina.*

(It is possible to eradicate and stop violence against women and girls. The Church needs to play a big role, and individual congregations need to help the victims as well as the perpetrators. They should have counseling programmes, as well as commit the situation to their monthly prayer meetings to pray for them)

#### ***Church minister 1 interview***

*E mafai lava ona foia ma taofia sauaga e faasaga i tina ma tamaitai. O le fofo alamea, o le saili lava lea o le fofo i le lotoifale o le nuu ma le aiga. E sili atu le malamalama o tagata o loo nonofo i le nuu i faafitauli o feagai ma le nuu, nai loo tagata mai fafo o le nuu. O lona uiga o latou foi e toe lalagaina le fofo o faafitauli. O le toe lalaga o le faaaloalo, o le teu o le va, ma suia le mafaufau ma talitonuga ole tane po ole alii i le faaaogaina o le aganuu ma le talalelei e alofia ai le faatinoina o sauaga.*

(It is possible to stop violence against women and girls. The answer lies within the problem itself, within our families and villages. The people in the village are more aware of the problems in the village, than those who do not live in the village. Therefore, they are the ones who need to be at the forefront of the solution. They should revive and relive the principles of mutual respect, nurturing sacred relationships, as well as a change in mindset and belief, to influence men to use the Samoan culture and Church to change their behaviour with regard to violence against women).

### *Cultural Expert 1 interview*

Clearly, both the Church minister and the Cultural expert have supported the Church as an intervention to address the impact of VaW upon the *aiga, nu'u* and *Ekalesia*. It is through the collaborative work of pastoral care and counselling by both the community and the Church, that are critical to any change in behaviour. In other words, the reality of Violence against women in Samoa is such, that the approaches proposed by “*E fofō e le Alamea le Alamea*” in this thesis will be vital to inspire a transformational approach for *aiga, nu'u*, and the *Ekalesia* to eliminate violence against women.

### **3.4. Summary**

The primary aim of this work as set down in the Abstract is to look at the potential root causes of violence through the Christian lenses, and recommend ways in which the Church can assist; targeting the spiritual aspect of our people’s lives, in a quest to eliminate violence against women. It is apparent that Chapter 3 has clearly summed up the primary aim of this work.

Despite the many studies and research on the root causes of VaW, it is clearer that the Church’s stance should be to uphold our Christian values of love, compassion, and justice for all, so that all may have life.

As highlighted by the qualitative interview analysis from the FWSD, cultural experts, service providers, victims and perpetrators, the case study provided analysis; the statistics and the literature reviews; all pointed out to the the Church as the most effective intervention and/or actor in the space of ending VaW.

The cultural approach; “*e fofō e le alamea le alamea*” provides a fitting complementary to the Church intervention. The linkage of the Church and its pastoral responsibility in

saving and setting people free from sin, is clearly translated by this work to include, saving and setting women free from slavery to violence.

There should also be a revival of the *alofa* and *fa'aaloalo* concepts within the community as both values are in line with the principles and teachings of the gospel. The theological discussion focuses on the relationship between God, VaW and the church community. This argument started in Chapter 1 and extended further in Chapter 3, to a more practical theological approach that alluded to the role of the church in including VaW to its pastoral work. Most theologians argued that an interpretation, but not the Bible, is the problem. The creation by God from nothing and the formless water and earth illustrates God's working together with formlessness to produce perfection. The church community should therefore work together with vulnerable members of the church for a harmonious community. God creates man in his image of love that is relational, therefore *tagata* and the church community should share this *alofa* to all. God even went through the VaW experience through not only physical punishment but also the social and political injustices. Therefore, the church community is the body that should also fight these struggles socially and politically.

God even 'victimised' Himself through Jesus Christ so that sinful human is reunited with God's family. Hence the Church's ministry could be modelled to the harmonious Trinitarian relationship that is never separated; the model for the church's *faiā*. CCCS's ministry is all about inviting all to God's family through 'service' and the 'word' of God. Therefore, CCCS mission should be through actions and positive interpretations of the Word of God, that is inclusive and barrier free for all.

## CONCLUSION

The issue of Violence against Women is a pandemic; with strategies and interventions to address it being contextualized by each country to eliminate it. Samoa has done its part to address the issue, with more vigorous work being done over the last 10 years through relevant legislations and localized interventions in the community, that continue to date. The literature review, the Methodological Framework, the Qualitative Information, Case Analysis and Individual Viewpoints; evaluated, used and discussed throughout this thesis, aim to answer the Research Question: ‘How can the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (CCCS) pastoral perspective, strengthen its pastoral role, and advocate for the elimination of violence against women in Samoa?’

Each of the three (3) chapters in this thesis has evaluated the CCCS’s potential intervention to eliminate VaW, through the Christian lenses. Firstly, as presented by the ‘*Tafatolu* Methodological Framework Model’ and its 3-sided approach: the contemporary academic approach; the cultural approach; and the self or researcher’s perspective. Secondly, as presented by the VaW in the Samoan context, specifically, on how the CCCS can provide remedies through spiritual guidance and rehabilitation, especially for those affected by this issue. Thirdly, as presented by the history of the CCCS and some of its founding documents relevant to addressing VaW.

This thesis has highlighted some of the way forward for the CCCS, should the Church consider to take a more active role in addressing VaW as part of its pastoral care responsibility. An evaluation of the *Tafatolu* Methodological Framework Model to provide a practical approach to ending VaW identified the need for the Model to work in parallel with the community as expressed by the Samoan proverb “*e fofo e le alamea le alamea*” which literally translates to ‘the solution to a problem lies within the problem

itself.’ The Samoan proverb brings to the equation our culture hence, a holistic approach to addressing the issue of VaW.

This thesis, through its qualitative review of the responses from the interviewees and casework statistics from service providers in this space, highlighted factors that has singled out the Faleata West Sub-District, the focus of this study, as one of the communities with the highest rate of violence recorded. Some of these factors include alcohol, financial distress and community instability due to the relocation of people from the rural areas to this specific area for school, employment or to reside temporarily following their being banished from the village. The Church, would therefore see it fitting to channel its pastoral care for the Faleata West Sub-District towards spiritual guidance and rehabilitation.

In addition, the qualitative data from the Church ministers and wives from the Faleata West Sub District clearly shows that there is lapse in the work of the church in community as a role model for our people. The church CCCS need to empower people to live Godly life in the community. Thus, a collaborative effort between Social institutions is necessary to effect change in attitudes that violate the integrity and dignity of all people. This is because for Samoans, Church leadership and religious teachings have a powerful impact on social values, attitudes, and behaviour of their communities and families. Thus, this central role in Samoan society allows the Church to have immense potential to be proactively involved in responses to Violence against women. For isn’t this part of the mission and ministry of the Church, and its prophetic message?

The thesis also argues, based on the analysis of the Case study presented herein, that there are societal attitudes of SILENCE, societal behaviour of MINDING our own

business and societal mentality of NORMS, that perpetuate VaW. Herein lies the gap for the Church to fill, through its pastoral care intervention to address VaW.

From the research, this study concludes that a way forward for the CCCS in addressing VaW would be a stronger involvement in the intervention programs through its pastoral care, specifically in fulfilling its healing and saving ministry.

No matter how we as a Church - *Ekalesia*, as a community – *nu'u*, or as a family – *aiga*, have fallen short of becoming prophetic voices for the voiceless, God's love is enough for all of us so we should not be silence and turning a blind eye to the suffering of some of the most vulnerable members of society.<sup>32</sup> The Apostle Paul clearly states in his first letter to the Corinthians Chapter 13: verses 1- 7, all about love. This love makes a better community to become as one body in Christ as we believe that we are. We all have one another and we need to love one another in order for the church to live life fully in Christ.

The community and the Church should no longer turn a deaf ear to the cries of the victims. If anything, the Church is called to break the silence on the issue of VaW. Breaking the silence means to speak openly about violence, naming it for what it is and naming it as a sin before God.<sup>33</sup> This must be the Pastoral role of the Church, hence, a recommendation for the CCCS to consider, which is the aim of this study.

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<sup>32</sup>Mercy Ah Siu-Maliko, "Public Theology, Core Values and Domestic Violence in Samoan Society" (PhD thesis, University of Otago, 2015), p.g 270.

<sup>33</sup>Marie M. Fortune, *Violence in the Family: A Workshop Curriculum for Clergy and Other Helpers* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1980), p. g204.

# APPENDICES

## “APPENDIX A”

### MALUA THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

#### Research Participant Consent Form

**Title of Research:**

‘Tafatolu Model’: Looking into the issue of Violence against Women from a Pastoral Perspective within the ‘Faleata West Sub-district of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa’.

**Researcher:**

NiuatuaOnesemo

- I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and what my contribution will be.

Yes	No
-----	----

- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions (face to face, via telephone and e-mail)

Yes	No
-----	----

- I agree to take part in the interview.

Yes	No	NA
-----	----	----

- I agree to the interview being tape recorded.

Yes	No	NA
-----	----	----

➤ I agree to digital images being taken during the research exercises.

Yes	No	NA
-----	----	----

➤ I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the research at any time without giving any reason.

Yes	No
-----	----

➤ **I agree to take part in the above study**

Yes	No
-----	----

Name of participant:

.....

Signature: .....

Date: .....

**APPENDIX B**

**MALUA THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE**

1) How long have you served the CCCS as a church minister?

0 - 5 years  (a)      >5 – 10 years  (b)      >10 – 15 years  (c)      >15 years  
and above  (d)

2) In your experience as a church minister, have you come across the issue of violence  
against women inside your parish and within any other church activities?

Yes  (a)                      No  (b)

3) From your experience and observation at your parish, how do you define violence  
against women and how do you address this issue?

---

4) Do families of women of violence push them to be involved in Sunday worship and  
church activities, or do they keep and protect them at home?

Encourage them to be Involved  (a)              Take care at Home  (b)              Not Sure  
 (c)

5) In your parish, does the church community support women of violence?

Yes  (a)      No  (b)

If **yes**, please give some examples below, if **no** go to question 6 please.

---

6. Please tick appropriate barriers you see faced by women of violence (you can tick all  
appropriate answers).

Cultural barriers in the community (a)       Economical barriers (d)

- Traditional barriers (b)       Church Community barriers (e)  
 Other barriers (c)       Family barriers (f)

Identify: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Any recommendations on how to include minimize and evict violence against women within the church and pastoral activities in the CCCS?

---

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**Faafetai tele lava and God Bless!**

**APPENDIX C**

Questions for Perpertrators of Violence against women
Date:

MALUA THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

1. Gender      Male  (1)    Female  (2)

2. Type of Violence : \_\_\_\_\_

3. Age \_\_\_\_\_

4. How do you define violence against women and how will you address it?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Does your family encourage and support you to act violently against women?

No  (1)              Yes  (2)              Not Sure  (3)

6. In your community, does the church community supports women of violence?

Yes  (1)              No  (2)

If **yes**, please give some examples below, if **no** go to question 7 please.

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Please tick appropriate barriers you experience is the cause of violence against women?

- Cultural barriers (1)
- Traditional barriers (2)
- Family barriers (3)
- Economical barriers (4)
- Community barriers (5)
- Other barriers(6)

Identify other barriers:

8. Any recommendations on how to minimize and evict violence against women?

---

---

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*Faafetai Tele lava and God Bless.*

## APPENDIX D

MALUA THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

Questions for women victims (females ) of Violence against women
Date:

1. Gender      Male  (1)      Female  (2)

2. Type of Violence involved: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Age: \_\_\_\_\_

4. As a woman of violence, do you prefer to keep it to yourself or seeking help?

Keep it to myself  (1)      Seek help  (2)      Not sure  (3)

5. Does your family encourage and support you as a victim of violence against women?

Involved  (1)      Take care at Home  (2)      Not Sure  (3)

6. In your community, does the church community supports you in attending Sunday Worship and church activities?

Yes  (1)      No  (2)

If **yes**, please give some examples below, if **no** go to question 7 please.

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Please tick appropriate barriers you experience is the cause of violence against women.

Cultural barriers (1)       Economical barriers (4)

Traditional barriers (2)       Community barriers (5)

Family barriers (3)       Other barriers (6)

Identify other barriers:

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8. Any recommendations on how to minimize and evict violence against women?

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***Faafetai Tele lava and God Bless.***

**APPENDIX E**

**MALUA THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE**

QuestionSheet
For A Samoan Cultural Expert
Date:

1) How long have you served as an expert of Samoan Culture (matai) ?

0 - 5 years  (a)      >5 – 10 years  (b)      >10 – 15 years  (c)      >15 years  
and above  (d)

2) In your experience as a services provider, have you come across the fundamental root  
of violence against women?

Yes  (a)                  No  (b)

If                                  yes,                                  please                                  identify:

---

3) From your experience and observation, how do you define violence against women  
and how do you address this issue?

---

---

4) Do families of women of violence push them to be involved in social activities, or do  
they keep and protect them at home?

Encourage them to be Involved  (a)                  Take care at Home  (b)                  Not Sure  
 (c)

5) In your work, does the community support women of violence?

Yes  (a)      No  (b)

If **yes**, please give some examples below, if **no** go to question 6 please.

---

6. Please tick appropriate barriers you see faced by women of violence (you can tick all appropriate answers).

- Cultural barriers in the community (a)     Economical barriers (d)  
 Traditional barriers (b)                       Church Community barriers (e)  
 Other barriers (c)                               Family barriers (f)

Identify: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Any recommendations on how to include minimize and evict violence against women within our community?

---

---

**Faafetai tele lava and God Bless!**

## GLOSSARY

Aganuu	- Culture
Āiga	- Family
Fa'aaloalo	- Respect
Faa-Samoa	- Samoan way of life and culture
Fānau	- Children, but can also mean giving birth
Feagaiga	- Covenant
Matai	- Chief
Nuu	- Village
Tamaitai	- Family and village ladies
Va	- Space, gap, relationship
Faletua	- pastor's / minister's wife
Faifeau	- church minister/ pastor
Vatapu'ia	- sacred space
E fofo e le alamea le alamea	- The remedy for the toxic sting of the Crown of Thorns starfish is the Crown of Thorns starfish itself

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