

Pacific Islander communities & anti-vaccination conspiracy theories

Recent research and reports by Sapkota, Robie, Clark, Kant et al et al in *Pacific Journalism Review* (2022) have highlighted the presence of anti-vaccination campaigners and right wing conspiracy theorist in New Zealand.

Their views are shared by some Pacific Island diasporic communities in Australia and New Zealand.

Kant et al have shown how similar ideas have been taken up and used in Fiji. Similar problems have been detected in Solomon Islands and PNG.



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Recent investigations by *Kaniva News* into the phenomenon show that the Tongan diasporic community in New Zealand is vulnerable to such anti-vaccination conspiracy theories.

Research has shown a number of reasons for the spread of anti-vaccination conspiracies in the Pacific communities. Research by the New Zealand Ministry of Health and others suggests this may be because of education, mistrust of government sources, uncertainty and cultural isolation.

Added to this must be the overwhelming nature of the event, such that it may appear to be too large to comprehend. This in turn may lead some people to seek simpler or simplistic solutions. These solutions may take two forms.

One is that the Covid-19 virus is in fact part of an enormous conspiracy to take over the world by a group of conspirators who want to establish a new world order.

The other is that this is a sign of the End Times and that vaccination is part of a Satanic conspiracy.



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against
COVID-19
INFORMATION FOR
PACIFIC PEOPLES

**Ngāue'aki NZ
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ke lēkooti'aki 'a
ho'o fe'alu'aki**

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QR CODES**

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In both cases, anti-vaccination conspiracies can make their ideas attractive by depicting those resisting inoculation, face mask wearing etc, as heroic warriors engaged in a struggle with the forces of darkness, whether personified by Jacinda Ardern or Beelzebub.

Research in the United States (Jackson, 2021) has shown a strong correlation between social conservatism and fundamentalist Christianity. While the research has focused on Republican evangelicals, these ideas have clearly been attractive to many people in the Pacific, where conservative forms of Christianity and social structures have provided a ready-made fit for these conspiracies. This has been reflected in New Zealand by the behaviour of Bishop Brian Tamaki and his followers.(MacDonald, 2021)

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