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## A Grounded Theory of Enterprising Mothers: Work-Life Balancing of Women in Fiji

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## A Grounded Theory of Enterprising Mothers: Work-Life Balancing of Women in Fiji

### Abstract

Gender equality is recognized as crucial for firms' growth. This paper attempts to investigate how and why do certain sociocultural and structural factors influence sustained gender inequality in Fiji? And then, using Grounded Theory (GT) method, it attempts to conceptualise how are Fijian working mothers striving to promote equality and diversity in the workplace, society, and family-life? By employing Grounded theory (GT) method, semi-structured interviews (32) were used to collect data from high-ranked officers in private and public sectors and, the interview transcripts were analysed using GT techniques: iterative and recursive processes of coding, categorising, theoretical sampling and constant comparison. The core category, "enterprising mothers need comprehensive support for equal status," emerged from Fijian executive mothers' efforts in: (1) securing a fair share for females in senior-management positions with the support of legal backing; (2) discouraging women's reticent attitudes towards sociocultural suppressions of gender equality; (3) challenging certain discriminatory structural factors and self-effacing allegations; and (4) balancing work-life and endeavouring career advancements. This study attempts, for the first time, to theorise these Fijian working mothers' efforts to conquer gender inequality and to expose how the Fijian sociocultural and structural system influences sustained gender inequality.

### Keywords

Fiji, gender inequality, grounded theory, motherhood, sociocultural and structural factors, work-life balance

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## **A Grounded Theory of Enterprising Mothers: Work-Life Balancing of Women in Fiji**

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Gender equality is recognized as crucial for firms' growth. This paper attempts to investigate how and why do certain sociocultural and structural factors influence sustained gender inequality in Fiji? And then, using Grounded Theory (GT) method, it attempts to conceptualise how are Fijian working mothers striving to promote equality and diversity in the workplace, society, and family-life? By employing Grounded theory (GT) method, semi-structured interviews (32) were used to collect data from high-ranked officers in private and public sectors and, the interview transcripts were analysed using GT techniques: iterative and recursive processes of coding, categorising, theoretical sampling and constant comparison. The core category, "enterprising mothers need comprehensive support for equal status," emerged from Fijian executive mothers' efforts in: (1) securing a fair share for females in senior-management positions with the support of legal backing; (2) discouraging women's reticent attitudes towards sociocultural suppressions of gender equality; (3) challenging certain discriminatory structural factors and self-effacing allegations; and (4) balancing work-life and endeavouring career advancements. This study attempts, for the first time, to theorise these Fijian working mothers' efforts to conquer gender inequality and to expose how the Fijian sociocultural and structural system influences sustained gender inequality.

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### **Introduction**

It is suggested that women's participation in management roles, their perceptions of their practices and the expectations others hold of them are still marked by gender, even though some women have benefited, through promotion. (Deem, 2003, p. 239)

At the dinner table, her boss made a casual remark saying that Ms. Sissy was trying to balance her office work and home affairs and she has been very smart and successful in the past and said, "I do not understand why she cannot continue, I can see her future is very bright with this company." An elder lady colleague joined the conversation saying, "maybe, boss, but we as responsible mothers cannot ignore our duties at home; I am here for a long time because my situation is different, you know?" Ms. Sissy responded, smiling and said, "leaving this company does not mean that I am going to waste my knowledge, skills and experience I have earned, I have some plans, with today's "new normal" concept, I would work from home." To this, the boss responded, "Yes, but you could have advanced your career easily in this company, where you started young. Many would jump at an opportunity like that." Ms. Sissy hit back

even before the sentence was finished, by saying, “To me family and my children come first. I can always help my little ones grow with the knowledge and experience I have.” There was silence for a few seconds, but I (the author) could not gauge whether it was an expression of agreement or disagreement with others.

There were six females and two males at that farewell party. Apart from me, the other male was the husband of the auditor of that company. I noticed their remarks and sentiments of managing home affairs and office work very carefully. The discussion went on for a long time, until midnight. So, I decided to interview them separately to gather further data to discover what problems this issue produces and how they are addressed by working mothers in Fiji, from their own perspectives.

Another day, on a different occasion, during a discussion, one of the participants, a lady executive, said that many Fijians are traditionally risk averse, and the situation worsens when investment decisions are made by women. Interestingly, another participant points out that the South Pacific Stock Exchange (SPX) is headed by a woman, and, out of 12 staff members of the SPX, 10 executives are women. However, it was noted that only a very few women are in corporate boards of companies listed in in the SPX.

These observations indicate that there is potential to shed light on important topics (equality, diversity, discrimination, and inclusion) in a geographical area like the Fiji Islands that appear under-researched in this regard. Therefore, this study attempts to explore how and why do certain sociocultural and structural factors influence sustained gender inequality? and, conceptualise how are Fijian working mothers striving to promote equality and diversity in the workplace, society and family-life? Grounded Theory (GT) was chosen as the most appropriate method of analysis due to its ability to identify social processes by inductive generalisations, complemented by deductive confirmations and abductive inferences (Darvill et al., 2010; Glaser & Strauss, 1965) by interviewing a few company executives and academics in Fiji. When using the GT approach as a research method, Glaser (1978) advised choosing a substantive area with a life cycle interest to maintain motivation to get the research completed. I believe that the efforts of working mothers over work–life balance seem interesting and substantive enough to be explored. The findings of this study may encourage those who have interest in gender diversity, to promote female representation in corporate boards of Fijian public companies while offering voice to various segments of society who are advocating greater gender diversity in Fiji.

## Literature Review

The effects of female involvement in senior management positions and firm performance have attracted the attention of scholars in recent years. However, these studies are mostly based on the samples from developed countries (Ali & Shabir, 2017; Gartzia, 2021; Reguera-Alvarado et al., 2017). In family businesses, the female member role in management may be overshadowed by men (Pham & Hoang, 2019) while their appointment on corporate high position can also be driven by family members and the dominated level of family (Bettinelli et al., 2019).

### Gender Diversity and Pink Unicorns

*The Economist* (2019) reports: “...the Netherlands will join seven European countries (and California) in replacing the carrot of ‘please’ with the stick of ‘or else’ to increase gender diversity...Firms should avoid seeking [a] ‘pink unicorn’ who ticks all conceivable boxes” (p. 54).

While many company boards have no gender diversity, some have a token “pink unicorn” defined as a single female director who, like a unicorn, looks nice but is fictional and without meaning or value. In this light, the gender composition of directorship of Fijian listed companies is analysed and given in Table 1. There are only 21 (17%) women directors out of a total of 124 directors of 21 Fijian public companies listed in the South Pacific Stock Exchange (SPX). There were only five companies that had more than one female director while eight companies had no female representation at all on their corporate boards. Eight companies have “pink unicorns” (a single female director). Among these companies, the Japan-based Free Bird Institute stands out with most of its directors being females, four females out of a total of seven, and if excluded from the analysis, the representation of females in the boards of Fijian listed companies would be only 14.5% (Saliya, 2020).

**Table 1**

*Structure of Board Members of Fiji Listed Companies as of 31 December 2019*

	Code	Company	Male	Female	Total
1	PDM	Port Danarau	4	0	4
2	ATH	Amalgamated Telecom	7	0	7
3	APP	Atlantic & Pacific Packaging	5	0	5
4	FHL	Fiji Holdings Ltd	6	2	8
5	FTV	Fiji Television	3	1	4
6	FML	FMF Foods	6	0	6
7	KFL	Kontiki	5	1	6
8	RBG	RB Patel	5	1	6
9	RCF	Rice Company Fiji	4	0	4
10	TTS	Toyota	5	1	6
11	VIL	Vision Investment	8	1	9
12	KGF	Kinetic Growth Fund	3	0	3
13	BCN	BSP Bank	8	2	10
14	VBH	VB Holdings	5	1	6
15	PBH	Paradise Beverages	5	1	6
16	FIL	Fiji Care Insurance	3	0	3
	PBP	Pleass Global	3	3	6
18	CFL	Communications Fiji	5	2	7
19	FBL	Free Bird Institute	3	4	7
20	PGI	Pacific Green	6	0	6
21	FFL	Future Forest	4	1	5
			103	21	124
			83%	17%	100%

I analysed the gender composition of academia as well using the Annual Report of the Fiji National University (FNU, 2019) as an example and found that they have only 10% female professors, 30.8% Associate Professors, 33.7% Assistant Professors with 54.5% of female Lecturers and 57% of Assistant Lecturers (FNU, 2019) indicating the typical situation of academia in Fiji.

Due to the difference of social awareness and the shortage of legal provisions, it is useful to explore and theorize the barriers that women encounter in climbing the corporate ladder in a developing country like Fiji. Fiji's national strategic planning document "the Roadmap for Democracy and Sustainable Socio-Economic Development" provides directions to all ministries and sectors to share the responsibility for achieving gender equality. This is evidence that statutory interventions are required to improve female inclusion.

### **Grounded Theory (GT) Methodology**

In GT method, more literature is reviewed during the conceptualisation stage as the data should be analysed without any presumptions and theories should emerge inductively and abductively and then confirmed deductively with theoretical sampling. Therefore, as suggested by El Hussein et al. (2017) on reviewing literature in Grounded Theory research, this literature review too is a multistage, reflexive, dynamic and integrative process.

Social scientists have long been studying relationships between sociocultural influences and social inequality in many societies (see Bourdieu, 1991; Douglas, 1978; Durkheim, 2001; Gluckman, 1965; Marx, 1970; Nichols & Cook, 2019; Saliya & Jayasinghe, 2016; Swartz, 1996; Turner, 1986; Weber, 1993). Some researchers (e.g., Bettinelli et al., 2019; Giraldez-Puig & Berenguer, 2018) argue that compared to men, women can bring different values of strengths and experiences, gender diversity in organisations. The difference with developed countries, where female quota on corporate boards is a legal requirement such as Norway (40 per cent) and Netherlands (30 per cent), quota legislation is not applied in developing countries such as Fiji. Moreover, in Fiji, compared to male colleagues, women have to overcome many obstacles to achieve a position in the senior management or on the board of directors and women, with femininity style, are considered to be unsuitable for roles of a leadership because they are more likely to be social service-oriented (over friendliness and tolerance) whereas, a typical leader has to be more performance-oriented (achieving rewardingness; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Kanter, 1977).

Although many researchers assert that some traditions can contribute to the formation of gender inequalities and to subordinate the role of women in society and inexplicable structural developments (e.g., Cooray & Potrafke, 2011; Klingorová & Havlíček, 2015; Wood, 2019), they are not successful in explaining it in its entirety in a highly religious country like Fiji.

About structural properties, Schulpen (2017) claims that paid paternal leave stimulates fatherly behaviour which reduce men's eagerness for top careers, thus creating more opportunities for women. Schulpen (2017) asserts that the demolition of women's glass ceiling starts with the father. However, "I don't believe in glass ceilings" was the answer of the woman CEO, Ms. Rohini Nanayakkara, to the question: "how did you break through the glass ceiling?" Ms. Nanayakkara was the CEO of the Bank of Ceylon and later of Seylan Bank, a large commercial bank in Sri Lanka. She was one of the most highly respected bankers and business leaders in Sri Lanka and insisted that she "has no time for dwelling on gender inequalities and inequities, but just ignored it. And for her it ceased to exist" (Gunawardana, 2011, p. 1).

Although the phenomenon of "women accepting a consolation grade" is challenged by some scholars (e.g., Greenwald & Farnham, 2000; Stocker, 1996; Yamaguchi et al., 2007), many studies revealed that self-exclusion and self-effacement may result in barriers that the individual imposes on herself. Thus, many exclude themselves from advancing career drives (see Kronk, 2018; Sandberg & Scovell, 2013) because they conform to cultural values and gendered stereotypes (Crittenden & Bae, 1994). However, Queloz (2021) claims that this self-effacing concept is justified on moral grounds, which assigns blame rather than being functional. Moreover, Crittenden and Bae (1994) suggest that women are perceived as more

socially responsible and likable. With respect to her own experiences of career versus motherhood, Sandberg and Scovell (2013) refer to the problem of guilt management: “Women are hindered by barriers that exist within us. We hold ourselves back ... we internalise the negative messages” (2013, p. 8). These arguments have been severely criticised as “too elitist,” as “tone-deaf” to the struggles faced by the average woman in the workplace and for overlooking the struggles of mothers (see Dowd, 2013; Goldstein, 2018; Lombrozo, 2013). This internalisation of negative messages could be highly influenced by sociocultural factors as widely observed in more religious societies such as Fiji.

Huang (2011) pointed out a famous Chinese proverb: “a woman without knowledge is a woman of virtue.” Reinforcing the concept of male ownership, he goes on to add that, traditionally, a woman should be held under the dominance of a man—her father before marriage, her husband after marriage and her son after her husband’s death. Given the pervasive sociocultural ideal of dominant male superiors, women are often negatively stereotyped and seek to dissociate themselves from attributes that do not comply with this sociocultural ideal, sometimes incorporating postponement or even renouncement of family formation (Gewinner, 2018, 2019). Even though work–life balance for women has been studied in literature elsewhere, this study focuses on sociocultural perspectives in order to conceptualise the efforts of Fijian working mothers to gain equality and diversity in the workplace, society, and family-life?

## **Method**

### **Genres: Traditional, Evolved and Constructivist Grounded Theory**

Grounded theory has several distinct methodological genres: traditional GT associated with Glaser; evolved GT associated with such theorists as Strauss, Corbin, Clarke, and constructivist GT associated with Charmaz (Birks & Mills, 2015; Bryant & Charmaz, 2015). Each variant is an extension and development of the original GT by Glaser and Strauss. All genres of GT share commonalities across and differences such as the philosophical stance of the researcher and the system of coding and theory development (Tie et al., 2019).

GT is widely known as a structured and subjectivist qualitative inquiring strategy where interpretations are placed in the centre of the process of extracting data and constructing theories about social reality (Charmaz, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The positivist approach of classic GT aims at conceptualising an objectivist core category (Glaser, 2020b), while constructivist GT’s methodological underpinnings focus on co-construction of participants’ experiences and meanings (Charmaz, 2006, 2020). However, according to Glaser (2020a), the most important property of conceptualisation for GT is qualitative abstract nature of time, place and people, and “concepts in general, whether conjectured, impressionistic or carefully generated by GT, have instant ‘grab’” (Glaser, 2020a, p. 7).

GT emphasizes not only deductive derivation or some other logical method that is intended to prove certain conclusions but also using the induction process, it seeks to present empirical evidence to prove something as truly so. GT further facilitates inferences by abduction, which goes beyond these derivations and generalizations, such as looking at right and wrong in theories and/or creating or predicting theories. What is happening in this conjecture is simply arguing that something might be plausible. Therefore, in order to introduce a new idea or to understand a new phenomenon, abductive conjecture rejects the theory of rigid, stubborn, positivist, deductive certainty and the flexible humanistic interpretive judgments of induction methods (Saliya, 2022).

In this study, I combine both classic and constructivist approaches as illustrated in Figure 1 and attempt to derive constructivist elegant themes towards a classic core category to



conceptualise how are Fijian working mothers striving to promote equality and diversity in the workplace, society and family-life? Coding, categorising, and theoretical sampling.

A code is the term used to describe the word or short phrase that captures the main essence of one small dimension of data. Saldaña (2013) insisted that codes denoting action, which he calls process codes, can be used interchangeably with gerunds; verbs ending in “ing” (Tie et al., 2019). Coding schemes can be developed deductively or inductively, and typically the coding schemes develop and change as it is used. GT is a research tool which enables to seek out and conceptualise the latent social patterns and structures of an area of interest through the process of constant comparison.

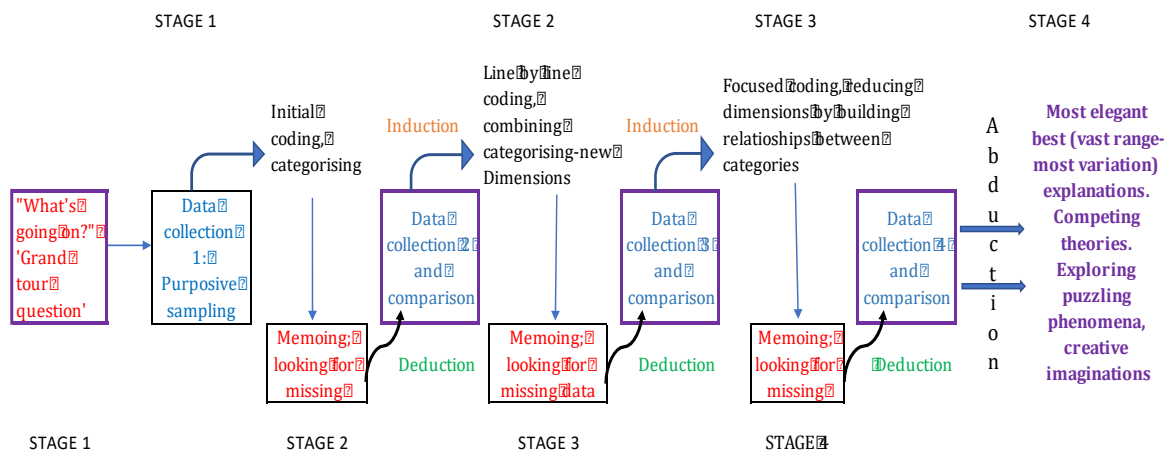
Codes are created from the raw data and constantly compared with each other while writing memos to uncover connections. Then these codes are integrated into categories with additional memos which were constantly compared with each other, sorted, and while data are conceptualised it will suggest where to go next to collect data and more-focused questions to ask; this is called: “theoretical sampling” (Glaser, 2020a, 2020b) with the goal of developing a theory (Chametzky, 2020).

**Illustration of the Process**

Grounded theory research framework (design and the process) has been illustrated and presented as a diagrammatic and/or as a visual guide by several scholars (e.g., Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Mruck & Mey, 2019; Roman et al., 2017; Tie et al., 2019; Ward et al., 2017). However, they are confined to only either visualise the iterative processes and coding methods or to elaborate theorising methods such as induction, deduction and abduction.

Figure 1 shows a comprehensive framework that attempts to encompass every aspect of the design, iterative and recursive process, the interplay and movement between methods, and processes that underpin the generation of a GT. It shows the gradual transcending process from its conceptual level and its 3rd and 4th level perceptions.

**Figure 1**  
*The Iterative and Recursive Process of Undertaking the GT Methodology*



Note. Source: Designed by the author

“First cycle” coding (Miles et al., 2014), “initial coding” (Charmaz, 2006), and “open coding” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) refer to the initial assigning of codes to data chunks. The second cycle is bundling, condensing, integrating and laying the first cycle codes into broader and more coherent categories and themes (Miles et al., 2014), identifying patterns, relationships

and explanations. This is referred to as “pattern coding” (Saldaña, 2013), “focused coding” (Charmaz, 2006) and “axial coding” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). At this stage, advanced coding is essential to produce a theory that is grounded in the data and has explanatory power. During the advanced coding phase, concepts that reach the stage of categories will be abstract, representing stories of many, reduced into highly conceptual terms. Finally, themes are created to reflect “big” ideas that emerge from data (Aurini et al., 2016) conceptualising elegant themes and theorising a core category by combining categories into broader dimensions.

Glaser (2020a) stated:

Inviting participants to review the theory for whether or not it is their voice is wrong as a ‘check’ or ‘test’ on validity. They may or may not understand the theory, or even like the theory if they do understand it. Many do not understand the summary benefit of concepts that go beyond description to a transcending bigger picture. GT is generated from much data, of which many participants may be empirically unaware. (p. 5)

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

To comply with the ethical requirement for research involving human subjects, this study was approved by the faculty ethics committee of the Fiji National University. To ensure ethical research practices, participants' safety and privacy were protected, and potential risks were minimized by adhering to standard research ethics guidelines such as obtaining informed consent and maintaining strict confidentiality or anonymity. Participation was voluntary, and some chose not to participate. Participants were provided with my contact information to clarify any questions or concerns. Data was securely stored in my computer, and the hard copies were shredded after inputting them into the system. The interview protocol was developed by reviewing literature and then did a pilot run with five colleagues. This process involved feedback and revision to ensure that the interview questions are relevant and appropriate.

### **Interviews**

After the dinner table experience, I made the first round of interviews with five women executives holding senior positions in their respective institutions. The interviews were conducted face to face, via telephone, and follow-up emails. The first few contacts were obtained thanks to the fellow members of Chartered Accountants working for leading audit firms, including the Big Four firms in Fiji. Then I asked each interviewee to put me in touch with senior executives of their client companies. All of them were university graduates, including the auditor, and two were from government institutions; one was employed at the Reserve Bank of Fiji, and the other was from Fiji Provident Fund. Further, with the women academics working for all three universities in Fiji, the interviewees provided further possibilities for gathering diverse views on the issue and are not intended as a representative sample of the whole population.

Several rounds of interviews were conducted making a total of 32 participants (auditors, educationalists, and company directors) from leading accounting/audit firms, universities, and Fijian companies, and high-ranked government officers. There were many repeated interviews/discussions/chats, some were only very brief checks over the telephone, a few emails as well, until I was satisfied that the categories generated had been grounded well on the data as the same answers were provided by the participants even if the questions were crafted differently. These categories were identified by clustering the codes as shown in Appendix A and summarised in Table 3. Those conducted in a private office on the premises

of an employer firm lasted between 20 and 30 minutes. Those conducted at the individual's homes (eight out of 32) lasted between 45 and 90 minutes.

The initial research discussions centered on the reflecting of gender diversity by way of a "pink unicorn," compared to the norm of 30 percent women's representation in corporate boards of directors promoted mainly by European countries (*The Economist*, 2019). We discussed whether Fiji should also propose enactments to provide more opportunities to women in corporate boards?; why there are a few female representations in corporate boards of Fiji public companies and, based on responses, we extended our discussions further to how a person's gender influences her career advancement; why there were fewer female senior academics (senior lecturers, assistant professors, professors, deans) than male; why there are fewer female academic professors in Fiji universities. Based on initial codes and concepts, the theoretical samples were repeatedly used to include women who hold executive and senior academic positions and their male partners who had participated in the first stage of interviews.

In one interview, a participant spoke of her partner insisting she prioritise the affairs of their children over office work. Therefore, we discussed balancing motherhood responsibilities and office duties in subsequent interviews and examined whether such experiences are common, and ultimately sought to interview the partners to gain their perspectives.

### **Coding, Grouping and Conceptualizing**

Coding schemes were developed deductively from theories or prior studies as well as inductively and changed inductively from reading and interpreting the qualitative data. Then several substantive categories were identified, refined and differentiated the categories that result from open coding. After identifying the latent social patterns and structures through the process of constant comparison.

I generated as many codes as possible (116 codes; Appendix A) from early data (words or groups of words) keeping such codes as close to the data as possible and advocated embedding actions (gerunds) in the codes (Gibbs, 2015). The next step after several substantive categories have been identified, is to refine and differentiate the categories that result from open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). GT is a research tool which enables to seek out and conceptualise the latent social patterns and structures of an area of interest through the process of constant comparison.

Then, when compared to the responses while creating the codes and grouping them using common patterns, a strong perception emerged among the participants that motherhood had been a main challenge in relation to career advancements compared to their male counterparts. Therefore, I extended the next interviews to include only working mothers and inquired about how they resolved these job-home-related problems? Among them are two of my university colleagues (lecturers), an adult undergraduate student who was a mother employed at a bank and two participants of the initial interviews were also retained as they showed more interest in participating. During the interviews with these participants, based on the memos I prepared on the initial discussions and codes generated, further perceptions were exposed, and we extended our discussions further: Why were there only a few female representatives in corporate boards of Fijian companies? How did they plan to advance their careers? Why were there fewer female senior academics (senior lecturers, assistant professors, professors, deans, etc.) than male senior academics? To what extent did their partners help to resolve home affairs such as babysitting, cooking, washing and cleaning, etc.? A few male partners were also included as theoretical samples in the subsequent interviews to confirm certain claims made by their partners.

## Results: Elegant Themes, Social Patterns and Properties

Initial codes, subsequent codes and sub-categories are provided in Appendix A. The core category, “enterprising mothers need comprehensive support” for equal status emerged from four elegant concepts which were conceptualised from Fijian executive mothers’ efforts in: (1) securing a fair share for females in senior-management positions with the support of “legal backing”; (2) discouraging women’s reticent attitudes towards sociocultural suppression of gender equality; (3) challenging certain discriminatory structural factors and self-effacing allegations; and (4) balancing work–life and pursuing career advancement.

The traditional qualitative method for presenting research results follows the D-A-I formula, which entails a sequential process of data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Wolcott, 1990). However, Grounded Theory methodology involves an iterative process where data collection and analysis occur simultaneously. In this method, “The researcher codes the data and systematically compares and integrates categories until the core category or categories emerge. These categories are then linked together to form a substantive theory of the phenomenon under study” (Glaser & Strauss, 1965, p. 33).

According to Strauss and Corbin (1998):

The most distinctive aspect of grounded theory is its simultaneous data collection and analysis procedures. Researchers do not just collect data and then, at some later time, analyze it. They simultaneously collect and analyze data, moving back and forth between the two activities. (p. 23)

This process is demonstrated in the Appendix A: Categorizing Social Patterns, and Conceptualizing Themes where the categories and selective properties (qualities) derived from grouping initial codes and doing theoretical sampling repeatedly (Saliya, 2022).

### Legal Backing

The emergent elegant theme showing interest in seeking statutory patronage with appropriate legislations for board representation was substantiated with overwhelming support shown by the participants for a statutory quota of a minimum 30% requirement for female representation on corporate boards of larger public companies; this showed the support for the legal steps taken by European countries.

Some older, more senior, participants showed more frustration than the younger mothers as they have been held back for a longer time in the same position while men with less experience have been promoted because they had gained postgraduate degrees such as MBAs and thus could strengthen relationships with higher authorities. The women’s patterns demonstrated a lack of self-confidence in competing with privileged men as a cause for seeking laws to ensure further opportunities. A reference was made to a successful older woman: “...while it may have been efficient at the time, she missed the growth and most of her child’s milestones, and somehow this created a rift between mother and child which somehow seems very hard to bridge later in life.”

In this light, the following properties became the constituents of the emergent, elegant theme of seeking protection.

### *Feeling Frustration*

Stagnant in the same position for a longer time due to reasons connected with motherhood and an inability to cope up with male counterparts in competition for career

advancement: "...it is quite impossible that the hand that rocks the cradle can rock the boardroom."

The above idea was typical of some of their views. The data analysis (reiterative coding) clearly contributed to emerge a category of social pattern "seeking legislation" with remarks such as: "...there should be mandatory gender quotas for women rather than rely on changing sociocultural environment."

### ***Feeling Discriminated Against***

This property also emerged from the data analysis for almost every aspect of women's lives, at home, at colleges including universities, in temples, etc. Another contributing aspect to slow or unchanging gender opportunities may be due to the deterministic behaviours of male managers.

Therefore, the theme of "legal backing" emerged from the social pattern identified as "seeking legislation" based on two properties (Feeling frustration and Feeling discriminated) by grouping codes such as lack of acceptance, recognition, collaboration, accommodation, support, and confidence, women's juggling of multiple responsibilities, perceived weakness, need for compromise, and vulnerability, the importance of safeguarding their rights and safety, negative attitudes, double standards, hypocrisy, rules, enforcements, patriarchal, think out of the box, social norms, pre-conceived ideas, ego, conservative attitudes, musculo-centric, musculo-phallic.

### ***Discouraging Reticent Attitudes***

Shaver (2015) points out that all individuals may invest in rituals to a similar extent, but high-status individuals receive greater benefits by manipulating ritual systems. In this light, it seems that this condition is a social pattern silently tolerated by women, where men too, like high-status individuals, are benefitted disproportionately compared to women due to the influences of traditional and religious practices. All the participants in this study showed empathetic traits and it appears that women, especially mothers, do most of the unpaid care work. The participants shared the view that women are inundated with unique necessities, compared to men (such as special clothing, dressing and cosmetics, etc.), keeping them busier and needing to work tirelessly such as: having to prepare at night necessary items for the next morning, leaving them sleep deprived. Another sub-pattern contributing to conceptualising the enduring category was believing "change with respect to gender equality is in progress," and that, "in time, such disparities will disappear," or "God will look after us," etc.

Enforcement would seem to be necessary given that inequality has not disappeared over time. These social patterns emerged from the data analysis contain the following properties.

### ***Empathizing***

Demonstrating understanding as well as socially acceptable reactions to the feelings of others was perceived by the participants as an essential ingredient of their work-life endeavours.

### ***Tolerating***

Exhibiting super-keen senses in relation to situational need even if it involves more work and energy was another sub-pattern to emerge with properties such as tireless work

patterns, less sleep, etc. It emerged that sociocultural practices motivate women to accept gender inequality and imposes on women a passive acceptance of lower status.

### ***Believing***

Another property emerging from the categories is the perception of that gender equality is in progress, and disparities will disappear, or God would create justice in this area.

Therefore, this elegant theme “discouraging reticent attitudes” has been formed by the social pattern recognised as “enduring and bearing” by aggregating the properties of Empathizing, Tolerating and Believing by grouping the codes such as nurturing, role models, bringing up children, empathizing, dedication, homemakers, sympathising, family, expectations, devotion, tolerating, guilty minded, dedication, the God, pre-conceived ideas, lack of recognition, religious beliefs.

### **Challenging Discrimination: Rebuffing and Rejecting**

Social patterns produced in the brain by nerve cells have been formed over millennia and brains make decisions to act before the conscious mind is aware of them (see Blakemore, 1990; Crick, 1994; Libet, 1985) because, as brains evolved over their primate and semi-primate existence, dominant males evolved to see females as ownership opportunities –as a selfish gene (Dawkins, 1976). When integrating categories, it emerged that these theories were criticised and challenged by many respondents.

### ***Rebuffing and Self-Effacing***

The data clearly contributed to emerge this category of social pattern with remarks such as rebuffing perceptions (such as women preferring a partner who is taller and of higher status, because such males are better protectors and providers (Alba, 2017)). The respondents identified the internal obstacles that seem to be intrinsic to women such as self-effacing attitudes which, among men, appear less prevalent. Bian et al. (2017) report that women are underrepresented in success because they are stereotyped as not possessing innate talent.

### ***Challenging and Rejecting Structural Barriers***

Socially constructed employment relationships reflect unconscious male prejudices about the roles of women as found by Leslie et al. (2015). Such roles may reflect traditional roles where men are invariably seen as dominant. An interesting finding regarding the role and female academic success is that attractive young women may more easily get junior positions but there is no later promotional benefit to be had from attractiveness (Liu et al., 2018).

Therefore, this elegant theme “rebuffing, self-effacing and rejecting male-dominance social structures” has been constructed by aggregating the social patterns and properties of Self-effacing and Challenging by grouping the codes such as gender diversity, gender equality, different signals, lack of collaboration, accommodation, men are leading, changing, barriers, glass ceiling, career advancement, disadvantaged, corporate requirement, interruptions, business needs, late hours, the best person, irrespective of gender: female or male, right people, experience, empowerment

## **Work–Life Balance: Career Advancement Endeavours and Multi-Tasking**

A further concern is the plight of working mothers. Women are faced with making continuous compromises between their careers and their family and both choices engender guilt for the foregone option. Family becomes a decision priority for women and within a strong religious culture, motherhood is seen as a priority role for women.

Miti-tasking is one prominent category to emerge from integrating Axial/Focus coding on patterns; this was affirmed in subsequent interviews and in other sample data. Multi-tasking includes the opportunity cost of performing these tasks efficiently as responses were such as, “...this is the price a woman has to pay – if she wishes to advance in [her] career, then family life will suffer one way or the other – it is an opportunity cost every woman must make.”

However, one also said: “if the woman is single and has no children, then definitely she can succeed and make it to the top – no sweat.”

The properties of this category included the sub-patterns “grabbing chances,” “caring,” and “optimizing,” emerged (however, these last two are more casual and were occasional chances rather than career-advancing breaks) when integrating the codes.

This property emerged when the selective codes were integrated with the focus codes that are assigned for seeing opportunity in everything and everyone – their neighbours, friends, family, business associates, strategic partners, etc.

### ***Creativeness***

The codes (data) provide evidence to suggest that women are masters of navigation and putting their ideas to the test is their strength. They do this through networking. They generally follow up and make sure that tasks are completed satisfactorily. Additionally, their inherent ability to be creative allows for the discovery of opportunities that other people miss (Llopis, 2011).

### ***Optimizing***

A perception was apparent regarding women’s abilities to see what men cannot do or are not willing to do and men keep pushing their ideas and ideals when prudence says quit. Although these skills, taken together, indicate that women might be better than men at maximising serendipity, many participants agree male partners should contribute to optimizing work-life balance of – this was another sub-pattern to emerge.

Therefore, this elegant theme “work–life balance” has been formed by the codes related to the social patterns recognised as Creativeness and Optimising by grouping the codes such as multiple roles, multi-task, multi-skilled, competitive, competent, perspectives, professionalism, performance, organized, logical nurturing, role models, bringing up children, empathizing, dedication, homemakers, sympathising, family, expectations, devotion, tolerating, attractive, talent, intuitiveness, competent, constructive, creativity, innovation, collaboration, decision-making, value addition.

## **Integration of Elegant Themes into a Core Category of Theory**

These concepts emerged from broader categories such as sought-after legislation (for selective/quota-based opportunities), observed gender imbalances, perceived multi-talented motherhood, warranted motherly demands and, undemocratic traditions and beliefs (tolerating male dominance and sociocultural expectations and warrants). Combining and reducing all these categories into four most elegant concepts considering the similarities in their social

patterns and, generating the theory of “enterprising-mothers need comprehensive support for equal status” would help us to broaden our understanding on how Fijian working mothers are striving to overcome male-dominated, sociocultural and structural barriers to minimise gender inequalities, especially in achieving career advancement.

The summary of the whole process of conceptualisation of this data analysis using iterative and recursive coding (Appendix A) is provided in Table 3.

**Table 3**  
*Elegant Themes, Social Patterns and Properties*

		Conceptualising of social patterns			
Core category		Enterprising mothers need comprehensive support for equal status			
<b>E M E R G I N G</b>	Elegant themes	Seeking legislations to secure a fair share for females in senior-management	Discouraging women’s reticent attitudes towards sociocultural suppressions of gender equality	Rebuffing self-effacing and rejecting male-dominant structural barriers	Apprehensively managing work-life balance while endeavouring career advancements
	Social patterns	Seeking legislation	Enduring and bearing	Rebuffing and rejecting	Multi-tasking and work-life balancing
	Properties	Protection Frustration	Empathizing Tolerating Believing	Self-effacing Challenging	Grabbing chances, Caring Optimizing

## Discussion

The results confirmed that, in family businesses, women's roles in management driven by family members and the family hierarchy dominated by men (Bettinelli et al., 2019; Pham & Hoang, 2019) and, substantiated by the emergent theme “Discouraging women’s reticent attitudes towards sociocultural suppressions of gender equality.”

The results also confirmed Leslie et al.’s (2015) claim that socially constructed employment relationships reflect unconscious male prejudices about the roles of women. An interesting finding regarding the role and female academic success is that attractive young women may more easily get junior positions but there is no later promotional benefit to be had from attractiveness as revealed by previous studies (e.g., Liu et al., 2018).

However, it was surprising to see the theme “Rebuffing self-effacing and rejecting male-dominant structural barriers” emerged from the data contradicting previous literature which pronounce that women are often negatively stereotyped and seek to dissociate themselves from attributes that do not comply with this sociocultural ideal (Gewinner, 2018, 2019). It was also interesting to learn, many respondents criticised and challenged the Dawkins’s (1976) claim that as brains evolved dominant males evolved to see females as ownership opportunities –as a selfish gene.

As suggested by Llopis (2011), the findings of this study also confirm that “women follow up and make sure they sow their seeds of ideas in the most fertile networking ground”



(p. 6) and, also their inherent ability to be creative allows for the discovery of opportunities that other people miss (Llopis, 2011).

Regarding equality, the findings of this study also support the claim that equality has to be enforced to be achieved because the society is corrupt and so far from a state of nature (see Jonathan, 2007; Weirich, 1992).

The lack of legal backing leads to missed opportunities for acceptance, recognition, collaboration, accommodation, support, and confidence, leaving individuals and organizations reluctant to pursue their goals with the necessary resources and backing (Kabeer, 2016). Legal backing is essential for the protection of women who are juggling multiple responsibilities and may be considered weaker, compromising, and vulnerable, ensuring that their rights and safety are safeguarded (Kabeer, 2016). This also confirms Kabeer's observation of UN task force definition that "women's economic empowerment can be achieved by targeting initiatives to expanding women's economic opportunity; strengthen their legal status and rights; and ensure their voice, inclusion and participation in economic decision-making" (Kabeer, 2016, p. 8).

Quota requirements for women on corporate boards are legally mandated in certain advanced economies such as Norway and the Netherlands (Ali & Shabir, 2017; Gartzia, 2021; Reguera-Alvarado et al., 2017). but not in developing countries like Fiji. The results of this study support the call for legislation to ensure gender equity in senior management positions, consistent with previous literature (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Kanter, 1977; *The Economist*, 2019).

Overall, the study shows that the lack of legal backing and the discriminatory practices against women continue to hinder their career growth and affect their advancement/well-being. It is essential to have legal backing to ensure that women's rights and safety are safeguarded and to promote gender diversity in senior management positions. Additionally, unconscious male prejudices about the roles of women need to be addressed, and women's unpaid care work needs to be recognized and shared. These steps will help promote a more gender-equal workplace and enable women to pursue their goals with the necessary resources and backing.

## Conclusions

There are many movements and ideologies such as Feminism and Marxism that aim to define and establish the political, economic, personal, and social equality of the sexes. However, socio-cultural traditions where the males' views are prioritized, and women are treated unjustly have not been discussed adequately in disadvantaged small island nations such as Fiji. In this study, it is revealed that fighting against gender stereotypes and improving opportunities for women are harder. The core category, "enterprising-mothers need comprehensive support for equal status," emerged from four elegant themes: seeking legislation for gender balance; tolerating sociocultural and structural suppression; rebuffing self-effacing and male-dominated structural factors; and reticently managing women's work-life balance while striving harder towards career advancement. These concepts emerged through categories integrated into several social patterns extracted from concurrent, recursive data collection, coding and integration.

These four elegant concepts explain some of the social patterns and/or problem-resolving efforts of Fijian working mothers who hold executive positions in various firms and universities in Fiji. These four categories of social patterns (which emerged from 11 sub-patterns or properties) are decisively influenced by sociocultural patterns and structural factors in Fiji. These 11 properties were conceptualised and grouped into four themes as follows: (a) feeling discriminated against, frustrated, feeling a need for backing (seeking a statutory boost); (b) empathizing, tolerating, and believing (which were integrated to generate the elegant concepts of enduring and bearing); (c) self-effacing and/or challenging structural properties

which were integrated to generate the elegant concept concerning rebuffing and rejecting; and (d) Creative and optimizing (which were integrated to generating another elegant concept of multi-tasking and work–life balance).

This exploration of social patterns also reveals that working mothers are striving to overcome disproportionately male-dominant cultures in Fiji in order to achieve career advancement. Consequently, working mothers perceive that, due to sociocultural barriers, they are disadvantaged when competing with their male counterparts in successfully advancing their careers. It emerged that this journey towards career advancement for working women, while also managing home affairs, is an enterprising effort in resolving problems.

A major weakness that this type of study would experience is selection bias and small sample size etc which are inherent to studies such as case study research and GT method. This limitation was exposed once the concept was shared with colleagues, a common consensus transpired – that such enterprising mothers are not rare in many occupations, professions and in a wide variety of situations. This also conceptualises latent patterns of behaviour found in many earning-mother scenarios. However, this “common consensus” did not reject the generalizability of the concept that those working mothers working harder (than men) to balance between home and office. Another limitation is severe ethical issues encountered when contacting participants due to the “anti-traditional” nature of the topic and especially when the researcher is not from the same socio-cultural backgrounds. Hence, the participants would not be honest in revealing their actual views. To minimise these limitations the theoretical sampling was extended until data saturation is achieved.

The findings of this study may encourage stakeholders, including professional bodies, and those who have interest in gender diversity, to promote female representation in corporate boards of Fijian public companies. This paper gives voice to various segments of society who are advocating greater gender diversity in Fiji. The study also fills a gap in the business-studies literature by exposing the sociocultural factors which are influential in determining gender diversity.

Further, the findings of studies like this one may encourage stakeholders, including professional bodies, investors, and those who have an interest in gender diversity, to promote female representation in corporate boards of public companies across the world. Such studies can give voice to various segments of society who are advocating greater gender diversity in their respective countries. Furthermore, research in this area can help fill a gap in the business studies literature by identifying the sociocultural factors that influence gender diversity.

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## Appendix A

### Coding, Categorising Social Patterns, and Conceptualising Themes

Open/initial coding		Axial/Focus coding creating categories  based on social patterns	Selective coding/properties
Code 1: 30% is Sufficient	Code 59: Protection	Opportunities	Frustration  Legal support
Code 2: 30% is a Challenge	Code 60: Traditions	Codes 1-7: %; Code 11: Law is necessary; Code 102: Lack of acceptance; Code 103: Recognition; Code 104: Lack of collaboration; Code 105: Accommodation; Code 106: Opportunities	
Code 3: 30% is a Problem.	Code 61: Men are leading	Protection	
Code 4: No %	Code 62: Changing	Code 12: Women are Juggling; Code 58: Women are weaker; Code 59: Protection	
Code 5: May be 30%	Code 63: Education	Code 76: Compromising; Code 77: Vulnerable	
Code 6: 50% ideal	Code 64: Advantaged	Code 78: Lack of support; Code 111: Lack of Confidence; Code 41: Reluctant	
Code 7: 10% minimum	Code 65: Devotion	Gender equality	
Code 8: Favouring males	Code 66: Career advancement	Code 9: Gender diversity; Code 26: Gender balance; Code 27: Gender equality; Code 34: Different Signals; Code 102: Lack of acceptance; Code 103: Recognition; Code 104: Lack of	
Code 9: Gender diversity	Code 67: Experience		
Code 10: Value addition	Code 68: Culture		
Code 11: Law is necessary	Code 69: Homemakers		Self-effacing Challenging
Code 12: Women are Juggling	Code 70: Religious beliefs		
Code 13: Multiple roles	Code 71: Conservative attitudes		
Code 14: Multi-task	Code 72: Think out of the box		

Code 15: Multi-skilled	Code 73: Motherhood	collaboration; Code 105: Accommodation; Code 106: Opportunities; Code 61: Men are leading; Code 62: Changing	
Code 16: Competitive	Code 74: Guilty minded		
Code 17: Achievement	Code 75: Caring		
Code 18: Disadvantaged	Code 76: Compromising	Restrictions	
Code 19: Based on Merits	Code 77: Vulnerable	Code 80: barriers; Code 81: Glass ceiling; Code 66: Career advancement; Code 18: Disadvantaged; Code 28: Corporate requirement; Code 85: Interruptions; Code 86: Business needs; Code 49: Late hours; Code 21: The best person; Code 22: Irrespective of Gender; Code 23: Female or male; Code 24: Right people; Code 67: Experience; Code 96: Empowerment	
Code 20: No idea	Code 78: Lack of support		
Code 21: The best person	Code 79: Passion for work		
Code 22: Irrespective of Gender	Code 80: barriers		
Code 23: Female or male	Code 81: Glass ceiling		
Code 24: Right people	Code 82: Longer hours		
Code 25: Lack of Prominence	Code 83: Musculo-phallic		
Code 26: Gender balance	Code 84: Restrictions	Multi-tasks	
Code 27: Gender equality	Code 85: Interruptions	Code 13: Multiple roles; Code 14: Multi-task; Code 15: Multi-skilled; Code 16: Competitive; Code 46: Competence; Code 47: Perspectives	
Code 28: Corporate requirement	Code 86: Business needs		
Code 29: Religious principles	Code 87: Disciplined		
Code 30: Creativity	Code 88: Organized	Code 112: Professionalism; Code 113: Performance; Code 88: Organized; Code 89: Logical	Creativeness Optimising
	Code 89: Logical		
	Code 90: Diligence	Creativeness	
		Code 35: Attractive; Code 36: Talent; Code 37: Intuitiveness; Code	



Code 31: Innovation	Code 91: Constructive	38: Competent; Code 91: Constructive; Code 30: Creativity; Code 31: Innovation; Code 32: Collaboration; Code 33: Decision-making; Code 10: Value addition	
Code 32: Collaboration	Code 92: Dedication		
Code 33: Decision-making	Code 93: Nurturing		
Code 34: Different Signals	Code 94: Role models	Caring	
Code 35: Attractive	Code 95: Bringing up children	Code 93: Nurturing; Code 94: Role models; Code 95: Bringing up children; 99: Empathizing; Code 92: Dedication; Code 69: Homemakers; Code 104: Sympathising	Empathizing Tolerating
Code 36: Talent	Code 96: Empowerment		
Code 37: Intuitiveness	Code 97: Family		
Code 38: Competent	Code 98: Expectations	Tolerating	
Code 39: Investors	Code 99: Empathizing	Code 97: Family; Code 98: Expectations; Code; Code 65: Devotion; Code 110: Tolerating; Code 74: Guilty minded; Code 92: Dedication	
Code 40: Advertisement	Code 100: Social norms		
Code 41: Reluctant	Code 101: Pre-conceived ideas		
Code 42: Opportunities	Code 102: Lack of acceptance	Beliefs	
Code 43: Discrimination	Code 103: Recognition	Code 109: God; Code 101: Pre-conceived ideas; Code 102: Lack of acceptance; Code 103: Recognition; 74: Guilty minded; Code 70: Religious beliefs	
Code 44: Practices	Code 104: Sympathising		

Code 45: Male Dominance	Code 105: Accommodation	Male dominance cultural practices	Discrimination
Code 46: Competence	Code 106: Opportunities	Code 50: Negative attitudes; Code 51: Double standards;	
Code 47: Perspectives	Code 107: Restrictions	Code 52: Hypocrisy; Code 53: Rules	
Code 48: Harassments	Code 108: Outdated	Code 54: Enforcements; Code 55: patriarchal	
Code 49: Late hours	Code 109: God	Code 56: Think out of the box; Code 100: Social norms; Code 101: Pre-conceived ideas	
Code 50: Negative attitudes	Code 110: Tolerating	Code 57: ego; Code 71: Conservative attitudes; Code 115: Musculo-centric; Code 116: Musculo-phallic	
Code 51: Double standards	Code 111: Lack of Confidence		
Code 52: Hypocrisy	Code 112: Professionalism		
Code 53: Rules	Code 113: Performance		
Code 54: Enforcements	Code 114: housewife		
Code 55: patriarchal	Code 115: Musculo-centric		
Code 56: Think out of the box	Code 116: Musculo-phallic,		
Code 57: ego			
Code 58: Women are weaker			

## Appendix B

### Examples of Questionnaires, Interviews and Summarizing Responses

#### 1. QUESTIONNAIRE

##### Pink Unicorns and Reflecting Gender Diversity in Fijian Companies

Dear Officer, we are doing a study on gender inequality in Fijian companies. These questions are meant for interviews but due to current situation, we thought of collecting responses by emails. We greatly appreciate your support by filling and sending this to [ca.saliya@fnu.ac.fj](mailto:ca.saliya@fnu.ac.fj)

**We expect short answers**

##### Questions for interviews

1. **There is a trend of making female representation in corporate boards a legal requirement, now many European countries have made this. what is your view on it?**
  - It is a good thing that making females representation is a legal requirement, this shows that in past or currently there are less women in the boards thus it has become a legal requirement.
2. **There is a compulsory 30% minimum representation of females in corporate boards, do you think that is sufficient? Why?**

30% women representative is not enough in corporate board. At least there needs to be 40 to 50% women in the board for better and equal decisions.
3. **Do you think Fijian public companies also should follow a similar rule when the top listed companies have no female directors or only one? WHY?**

Yes the companies in Fiji should follow similar rules where women should be included in the company's board for better understanding from both men and women context.
4. **What should be a legal requirement suitable to Fiji be: none, 10% 30%, 40% or 50%?**

At least 40%
5. **Why/How do you think that female representation would make a difference?**
  - Females would be able to voice their opinion out in regard to the operation of the organization. The opinion from a male will vary from a female thus both sides of opinion is needed to make better decision.

- 6. Many companies appoint just one director to their boards. There are 10 leading Fijian companies have only one female director. Do you think this a genuine effort to have gender diversity?**

Not really at least there should be more female directors.

- 7. This single female director in a board is referred to as ‘pink unicorn’ giving the meaning that imaginary thing (an eye wash), Do you agree?**

- No, I don’t agree

- 8. What kind of difference females can do in Fijian corporate boards, if they are appointed?**

They can raise their concerns in involving more women in leading roles and also increase diversity in the professional life.

- 9. What are the barriers Fijian women face in their career advancement to corporate boards?**

Not much opportunity

Culture barriers

- 10. Do you think that there is gender discrimination in Fiji, in general?**

- To same extent, but it is seen that mostly the gender discrimination is in the process of vanishing.

- 11. Do you believe that women are at disadvantaged in career advancement compared to men, in general?**

I don’t believe this statement, as it is seen that in some organizations there are more females than the males now.

- 12. What is your perception about men’s attitude towards gender diversity?**

Man are now trying to change their attitude compared to the days before.

- 13. Are there different attitudes between Hindus, Muslims and Christians/Catholics toward female leadership in religion?**

- To some extent as there are religions which restrict women from joining the workforce.

- 14. Does a religious background condition women to accept male leadership?**

- NA

- 15. Do you believe in glass ceiling? Why?**

- To some extent yes, but now it is seen that the women and minorities are given recognition.
-

## Appendix C

### Interview

#### Research on Gender inequality in Fiji.

12 August 2020, via Skype.

Interview # 15: Hinduism and women

Participant: Pinaki (35+), married, one daughter. Operation manager of a medium size company in Fiji.

**Question:** At the moment in USA, there is a discussion on gender inequality and feminism. What are your personal views on that?

**Answer:** Yes, men and women are same.

**Question:** Why do you opined like that?

**Answer:** In recent times the situation is changing, and women are getting more education

**Question:** Then why women are not holding responsible positions as men do?

**Answer:** Because the society is treating them differently.

**Question:** Why the society is doing that?

**Answer:** Because traditionally men are leading for long long period of time, but it is changing.

**Question:** What are the main factors constructing these traditions?

**Answer:** Religious beliefs and conservative attitudes

**Question:** Are there any barriers for women blocking them coming up in the business field?

**Answer:** No there is no barriers as such.

**Question:** Then are women not clever as men?

**Answer:** No no , they are very clever, they are good at multi-tasking

**Question:** They are educated and clever, then why there are a few women in higher positions?

**Answer:** They lack experience

**Question:** To get experience they should be given opportunities?

**Answer:** Yes, women are reluctant to explore opportunities

**Question:** Or they were comparatively disadvantage when offering opportunities?

**Answer:** Not as such, for example in my experience, they do not apply for such positions

**Question:** Are they discouraged to explore opportunities?

**Answer:** By whom

**Question:** By parents and husbands?

**Answer:** Yes, that can be the reason. They are not comfortable.

**Question:** Are they obedient to parents and husbands to be discouraged like that?

**Answer:** Yes, it is the family orientation

**Question:** Some say that women are more serious, neat and tidy?

**Answer:** I must say they are better organized than men

**Question:** Some say that women seek protection from men, they are advice seekers, fear to be independent?

**Answer:** No, I do not agree

**Question:** What is your religion?

**Answer:** I have a universal religion

**Question:** So, you do not worship?

**Answer:** I do, Hindu gods.

## Appendix D

### Summary of Responses: Sample

### Pink Unicorns and Reflecting Gender Diversity in Fijian Companies

<i>Item</i>	<i>Respondent 8</i>	<i>Respondent 9</i>	<i>Respondent 6</i>
1. View on <b>female representation in corporate boards a legal requirement</b>	It is a good thing that making females representation is a legal requirement, this shows that in past or currently there are less women in the boards thus it has become a legal requirement.	Yes, it is favorable. Women participants should be there in an organization.	I think that Board members of a Company should be appointed on the basis of merit only.
2. Is 30% minimum representation of females in corporate boards, do you think that is sufficient?	30% women representative is not enough in corporate board. At least there needs to be 40 to 50% women in the board for better and equal decisions.	Yes, it is sufficient, better if it increases. This gives opportunity to the females of communities.	I do not agree with a limit placed on the representation in the Company Board based on race, religion, gender, sexual orientation or anything at all.
3. Fijian public companies also should follow a similar rule.	Yes the companies in Fiji should follow similar rules where women should be included in the company's board for better understanding from both men and women context.	Yes, Fijian companies should follow when the company does not have any female director.	The most meritorious person should be picked for the position. I do not agree with positive discrimination in this circumstance, because the duty of the Board Members is to the Company, all appointments made should be in the best interest of the Company.
4. What should be a legal requirement suitable to Fiji be: none, 10% 30%, 40% or 50%	At least 40%	40%	The Company's should endeavour to promote the participation of all, but there should not be a legal requirement as such, as this may be detrimental to the Company, for example if the right person is not chosen for the Directorship and an individual is on the other hand is tapped on the basis of gender, and they don't have the necessary experience, the skills and nor diligence to undertake the duties of the position, then the Company suffers as a result of that persons incompetence.
5. Why/How do you think that female representation	Females would be able to voice their opinion out in regards to the operation of the	Ideas and views of female participant may vary	It may bring diversity of opinion and change in the manner certain things are done, but beside that I don't think

would make a difference?	organization. The opinion from a male will vary from a female thus both sides of opinion is needed to make better decision.	compared to male rep.	there will be any widespread transformation.
6.Many companies appoint just one director to their boards. There are 10 leading Fijian companies have only one female director. Do you think this a genuine effort to have gender diversity?	Not really at least there should be more female directors.	No	I think if there were more qualified female applicants wishing to sit on Boards, they will be given every opportunity to do so.
7.This single female director in a board is referred to as 'pink unicorn' giving the meaning that imaginary thing (an eye wash), Do you agree?	No I don't agree	-	No I don't agree with this concept, it is also condescending to that female director, who may be the most competent of all Directors in the Company.
8.What kind of difference females can do in Fijian corporate boards, if they are appointed?	They can raise their concerns in involving more women in leading roles and also increase diversity in the professional life.	May be new ideas and method.	Bring diversity to running of the affairs of the Company, but it must be stated that the duties of Directors are already set in the Articles of Association of the Company and the Company Act respectively, they cannot deviate from that.
9.What are the barriers Fijian women face in their career advancement to corporate boards?	Not much opportunity Culture barriers	In some families' girls after marriage women are not allowed to work.	The patriarchal nature of thinking in Fiji is very much prevalent, it may take a generation or two to get beyond it. However, women in Fiji are not discriminated against, they need time to just get there, but handouts are not the way forward in these circumstances.
10.Do you think that there is gender discrimination in Fiji, in general?	To same extent , but it is seen that mostly the gender discrimination is in the process of vanishing.	In some cases, after marriage of females.	No, I don't think so.
11.Do you believe that women are at disadvantaged in career advancement	I don't believe this statement, as it is seen that in some organizations there are	In some cases, after marriage of females.	No, everyone is now being given the equal opportunity in all aspect of life, there is no restriction on the number of females in a particular occupation or



compared to men, in general?	more females than the males now.		the opportunity to undertake a particular program as an undergraduate and so forth.
12.What is your perception about men's attitude towards gender diversity?	Men are now trying to change their attitude compared to the days before.	I believe some would agree and some not.	I think most men have warmed up to the concept of gender diversity at workplace as well as at home. But there are a small minority who think it is their God given right to lead in all aspect of the human life, except in the area childbirth.
13.Are there different attitudes between Hindus, Muslims and Christians/Catholics toward female leadership in religion?	To some extent as there are religions which restrict women from joining the workforce.	Yes, because different religion and families have different perception for women leadership.	Muslims and Hindus do not support the idea of female leadership at all. For example, in Islam men and women pray separately and the priest can only be a male. Christians generally in most denomination accept women leadership in their respective churches with exception of Catholics where man can lead and women pay a complementary role such as those of nuns.
14.Does a religious background condition women to accept male leadership?	NA	Yes	No, not in the context of a modern world, particularly those based on the Western principles, not in Fiji.
15.Do you believe in glass ceiling? Why?	To some extent yes, but now it is seen that the women and minorities are given recognition.	Yes, to some extent.  May be due to people with different believe.	No, I don't, because everyone in Fiji has the same prospect of achieving a particular thing, it depends on their dedication and ability.

**Respondent 5 further elaborated as follows.**

As testified by Indra Noya herself (former CEO of Pepsi) it is quite impossible that the hand that rocks the cradle can rock the boardroom. While she was a very successful CEO, she admits she missed out on her daughter's growing up, and most of her family/social events. She left the parenting for others to do: house girl, relatives, even her secretary. While it may have been efficient at the time, she missed most of her child's milestones and growing up, and somehow this created a rift between mother and child which somehow seems very hard to bridge later in life.

This is the price a woman has to pay- if she wishes to advance in career, then family life will suffer one way or the other – it is an opportunity cost every woman must make.

However, if the woman is single and has no children, then definitely she can succeed and make it to the top – no sweat!!

Although, like a certain successful career woman I know whom I had the pleasure of knowing while overseas– and now she is in her late 60s, she wished she had gotten married and had children instead of devoting so much time to her career, and is now rather lonely- just spends her huge millions she made travelling- alone ☹

### Author Note

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