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# Samoan Entrepreneurship: Natural Disasters, Vulnerability and Perseverance.

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## Contents

Abstract.....	I
Preface and Acknowledgements .....	II
1.0 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 The event – Tsunami devastates Samoa .....	3
1.2 Purpose of Thesis .....	4
2.0 CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW .....	7
2.1 Acknowledging entrepreneurship .....	8
2.1.1 Understanding indigenous entrepreneurship .....	9
2.1.2 Fa’aSamoa and entrepreneurship.....	10
2.2 Perseverance in an enterprising context.....	14
2.3 Natural disasters and the Pacific .....	16
2.4 Behavioural response to disasters .....	18
2.5 Vulnerability in context .....	20
2.6 Resilience explained .....	21
3.0 CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY .....	24
3.1 What are the Pacific voices on methodology for Pacific research? .....	24
3.2 The Chosen methodology.....	33
3.2.1 The interviews.....	40
3.2.2 Perseverance questions .....	43
4.0 CHAPTER 4: RESULTS.....	49
4.1 The interviews .....	49
4.2 The questionnaire.....	63
5.0 CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION.....	66
5.1 The role of fa’aSamoa .....	66
5.2 Social recovery versus economic recovery.....	68
5.3 Recovery and development.....	69
5.4 The role of reciprocity, the Government and NGOs .....	75
5.5 Persevering behaviour in the face of adversity.....	77
5.6 Perseverance and the role of religion .....	79
6.0 CHAPTER 6: LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS.....	81
6.1 CONCLUSIONS .....	84
6.2 REFLECTIONS .....	88
7.0 APPENDICES .....	90

7.1 Appendix One: Ethics Committee Approval .....	90
7.2 Appendix Two: Information Sheet .....	91
7.3 Appendix Three: Consent Form.....	93
REFERENCES .....	94

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this research has been to explore Samoan entrepreneurship together with the notions of vulnerability and perseverance in relation to natural disasters. The Samoan tsunami and its aftermath provide an opportunity to study the persevering behaviours of entrepreneurs in their natural environment. This has been done by interviewing twenty one micro-entrepreneurs who are members of the Women in Business Development Inc. (WBDI) organisation and asking them to discuss their experiences about the tsunami. The analysis of the results has provided a picture of how when in the face of adversity Samoan entrepreneurs overcome obstacles; deal with adversity and achieve their goals. It also implies that the role of culture (fa'a Samoa); religion and government and NGOs are key themes which seem to provide effective coping mechanisms thus aid in their ability to persist in spite of chronic and habitual challenges. Given these three factors the perseverance capability of Samoan entrepreneurship is characterised by strong faith, optimism and reciprocity.

## **Preface and Acknowledgements**

This study has been designed to take an exploratory look at Samoan entrepreneurship to see how it copes with adversity in particular natural disasters and persevering strategies employed. The research focus has been about understanding what happened so there is no view to propose a set of strategies that were most effective in this context, but this creates an opportunity for further research.

I would like to thank the relevant staff at Women in Business Development Inc. for their time and contribution to this research. I wish to acknowledge the amazing work they do for micro-entrepreneurship in Samoa to improve the lives of entrepreneurs and their families. I am especially grateful to the twenty one Samoan entrepreneurs for their courage, honesty and passion, whom without, this study would not be possible. They have inspired me to appreciate my own story and circumstances and to have faith that in spite of adversity a persevering spirit always prevails!

I wish to thank my supervisor for his guidance, direction and believing that there was a story to tell. I am also very thankful to my children, family and friends for their support. I am especially grateful to my daughter Georgia who has been an amazing help throughout the different stages of the research. Finally, I dedicate this work to my grandfather Moeva'a Fa'aeteete from the village of Leusoali'i, Upolu, Samoa who was a Samoan entrepreneur beyond his time. His memory has been an incredible source of strength, encouragement and inspiration to undertake this journey.