MĀMĀ MĀORI

Teenage Māori mothers' experiences of support for their holistic wellbeing and success

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Abstract

The study presented in this article is underpinned and guided by Kaupapa Māori theory and research principles (G. H. Smith, 1997; L. Smith, 2015). The purpose was to explore support systems comprising health, social, financial, education and whānau that exist for teenage Māori mothers/māmā Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand. Research participants were sourced from one Teen Parent Unit and are Māori who became mothers as teenagers. Effectiveness of support was assessed in terms of contribution to holistic wellbeing and success for māmā Māori. Holistic wellbeing and success were measured using Durie's (1984) Te Whare Tapa Whā model, which represents four dimensions of health as the walls, or taha, of a house: taha tinana, taha hinengaro, taha wairua and taha whānau. This study sought to empower participants by focusing on and promoting only positive experiences of support. Māmā Māori contributing and sharing their insights was considered a tool for change, growth and empowerment. While education and whānau were found to be effective supports, māmā Māori experiences of health, social and financial support were often variable, less effective and, in some cases, damaging. In articulating the study findings, this article presents an opportunity for readers to consider how we currently support this precariat group, and the ways in which we can do better.

Keywords

holistic, māmā, Māori, mothers, support, teenage

Introduction

Ongoing colonial narratives have perpetuated myths of Māori as flawed human beings, leading to systematic injustices maintained by racist rhetoric. In direct opposition to this view, the study presented here was concerned with dismantling these myths by exploring and strengthening supports to enable māmā Māori holistic wellbeing and success in Aotearoa New Zealand. Intergenerational trauma and a cycle of poverty persists for many Māori as a direct result of colonisation and land, language and cultural theft (Carter et al., 2018). While Western society has historically viewed young and/or unwed mothers with a negative lens, Māori traditionally view motherhood and the birth of a child as taonga (Jenkins & Harte, 2011). This study

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focused on māmā Māori for several reasons, but the key reason relates to issues of equity for Māori, particularly in relation to health, social, education and financial outcomes. The relationship between poverty and holistic wellbeing and success is made visible in the study findings regarding financial support.

There is broad consensus in the literature from Aotearoa that health, social, financial, education and whānau support are essential for achieving positive outcomes in life (Adcock, 2016; Allen & Clarke, 2019; Boulton & Gifford, 2014; Clifford-Lidstone & Ryan, 2013; Graham, 2018; Ministry for Women, 2018; Moeke-Pickering, 1996; Pio & Graham, 2016; Rawiri, 2007; Ruwhiu, 2009, 2019; Strickett & Moewaka-Barnes, 2012). In addition to this, several researchers have acknowledged and investigated the challenges faced by māmā Māori. Consistently highlighted are challenges such as stigma, judgement and discrimination (Adcock, 2016; Allen & Clarke, 2019; Clifford-Lidstone & Ryan, 2013; Māori Cultural Responsiveness Project Team, 2010; Ministry for Women, 2018; Pihema, 2017; Pio & Graham, 2016; Rawiri, 2007; Ware, 2014, 2019).

The study reported in this article shines a light on effective areas of support for teenage Māori mothers. The purpose is to empower research participants in sharing their personal story and further enhance their mana by having their story contribute to Kaupapa Māori research. Tihei mauri ora! The research question underpinning the study was: *What supports are provided for young māmā Māori that are effective at strengthening their wellbeing holistically and support their success within and beyond one Teen Parent Unit setting?*

Method

In Aotearoa there are 24 Teen Parent Units (TPUs), which provide education and wraparound support for teenage students who are pregnant or who are already parents. Research participants were sourced from one TPU located in a large rural town in the lower North Island. All māmā are Māori and became mothers as teenagers. Following a period of whakawhanaungatanga at the TPU, the eligible research participants engaged in self-selection and agreed to participate in the study. Pseudonyms were selected by the participants and are used here to maintain confidentiality.

Underpinned by an interpretivist paradigm (Berger & Luckmann, 1967) and aligned with Kaupapa Māori theory (G. H. Smith, 1997), this qualitative study took the form of narrative inquiry (Clandinin et al., 2015; Elliott, 2005).

By taking a narrative inquiry approach, it is possible to acknowledge the varied and diverse perspectives that individual research participants bring as well as the contextual underpinnings of each person's experience. Kaupapa Māori theory and interpretivist theory do not seek to quantify the human experience; instead, they look within and beyond that which can be measured statistically. In contrast to a positivist approach, this research explores the multiple truths and realities of research participant experiences through an interpretivist lens and qualitative research approach (Edwards, 2010).

A qualitative methodology naturally aligns to Kaupapa Māori research (G. H. Smith, 1997), where respect for the person and the mana of the person or research participant underpin research practice. Some tensions were experienced when using a Western framework of meaning-making with a Kaupapa Māori methodology. For the most part, however, tensions were absorbed by the kairangahau.

Four research participants completed in-depth individual interviews, resulting in the creation of individual pūrākau. As a sole Māori researcher was involved, sample size was determined by the practicalities of managing data. Additionally, sample size was impacted to a small degree by data collection occurring at the tail end of the COVID-19 pandemic. Data collected from the semi-structured interviews were then explored through thematic analysis (Ary et al., 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2006). The findings that highlighted the most positive/effective areas of support in relation to holistic wellbeing and success are presented in this article.

According to Indigenous researcher Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2000), "There are sound reasons why we are interested in education, employment, health, and history. Each of these domains situates us in crisis" (p. 232). Māmā Māori experiences of support in health, social, financial, education and whānau domains were explored within their pūrākau. Durie's (1984) Te Whare Tapa Whā health model was overlaid upon the pūrākau. The four domains—taha tinana, taha hinengaro, taha wairua, and taha whānau—were used to measure holistic wellbeing and success. Durie's (1984) model is well recognised in the health sector. It is acknowledged for its holistic approach, which is considered an essential element for culturally responsive practice in Aotearoa (Cherrington, 2009). Data were collected and stored securely, and coding and thematic analysis were undertaken by the sole kairangahau.

Findings

The areas of support that were explored in the study were health, social, financial, education and whānau. During the coding process, the pou inherent in Te Whare Tapa Whā were overlaid to make holistic wellbeing visible. Thematic analysis was completed on the transcribed interviews, which were the sole source of data for the study. Thematic analysis revealed three main themes: (a) Health, social and financial support: Access, quality and level; (b) Education support: Holistic support and relationships; and (c) The importance of whānau support.

Health, social and financial support: Access, quality and level

The study revealed that most māmā Māori experiences relating to health sector support were negative, challenging, or included both positive and less positive experiences. Only two of the research participants could relate positive experiences, and they did not cover all four domains of wellbeing explored. Two māmā Māori could not relate positive experiences in any of the domains.

When looking at young māmā Māori experiences of health sector support for strengthening taha tinana, the interview data indicated variable experiences, both positive and less positive experiences. For example, Jade thought health professionals "were very supportive", and Walker said the TPU midwife "prepared us for labour and delivery . . . She demonstrated everything, she was really good." Some challenges were indicated, however. Amelia felt that taha tinana was not positively impacted by health sector support, stating that "no one would help". She added: "They basically just took over . . . talking *about* me, not *to* me." The data highlighted variable levels and quality of health sector support. This ranged from Amelia reporting "they were useless" when sharing her general experience of health sector support through to Jade feeling "well catered for [and receiving] all the support I needed". Health support connections being made through links to education (school or the TPU) were highlighted by most of the research participants. Walker made the comment that her school "connected us to Youth Services and then TPU". Jade also stated that her school "referred me straight to the Teen Parent Unit". She added that once there, "all the support was at my fingertips".

Health sector experiences that positively impacted taha hinengaro were not always apparent. Amelia felt health sector staff "don't care about anyone's mental, physical or any of it", while

Walker needed a second midwife because "my first one was horrible [and] didn't communicate well with me". In contrast, when speaking of health sector support connected to the TPU, Jade stated, "They really impacted me positively because they lift you up [and] reassure you of your capability as a mum." She added that she experienced "more of a connected relationship . . . We get to know them, they get to know us, they know our family."

When exploring health sector support in relation to taha wairua, positive experiences did not feature strongly. Jasmin felt "let down a lot", and Amelia felt that support in this domain was all "pretty much negative". Walker stated that "they didn't really do much". Jade expressed disappointment that cultural aspects such as whakawhanaungatanga were overlooked by health professionals: "It was more Pākehā portrayed." She went on to say that she missed "opportunities I could have had that I didn't get", referring to traditional Māori birthing practices.

Looking at health support in relation to strengthening taha whānau, impact on this domain appears to have been minor. However, Jade did say that she liked having her mum attend medical appointments with her. Her mum was "there for support and if I didn't know what they were talking about, I know she would." Jade went on to say that it was her mum who provided much of the support: "My mum is my rock. She was there to just understand everything that was happening with me and baby."

Walker indicated that taha whānau was impacted more at the TPU, believing that "being here with the girls that are going through this" was the biggest support. She went on to say, "There was no one from the health sector to check on my health and wellbeing, just my mum." Amelia and Jasmin felt relatively unsupported too. Jasmin commented, "I don't think relationships have been positively impacted by health support." Amelia's comment was congruent with Jasmin's: "They didn't do anything."

More positive results were found in relation to social sector support than health sector support. Although māmā Māori shared examples of positive experiences in at least one area of holistic wellbeing, the experiences tended to be mixed—both positive and less positive. Sometimes, experiences were negative or challenging. This was most commonly the case when exploring social sector support in relation to taha whānau.

When asked if experiences of social sector support positively impacted taha tinana, Walker felt it was a case of "some people more than

others". Walker went on to say that social services offered reassurance around becoming a teenage mum, adding, "We weren't made to feel bad." Amelia saw the benefits social support afforded her in "getting me out of the house", and sometimes "they would shout a feed". Amelia then quantified those statements, adding, "You just have to get the right person." Jade felt that "you don't get the support unless you reach out for it", while Jasmin reported a lack of "follow through", adding that her experience was "stressful, and I was made to feel belittled by them". Although most māmā Māori reported generally good experiences, it was clear that social sector support was accessible due to their connection to the TPU. Jade said, "Going beyond that and having to do it yourself was a bit difficult." Amelia, who was not connected to a TPU with her first child, stated that "there was social support, but they weren't really supportive". Now connected to social support through the TPU, Amelia commented that "they were good . . . much better".

Generally, research participants felt social support was helpful in relation to taha hinengaro. Walker stated social support at the TPU helped her feel "secure . . . like we belong here [and that] the support was here anytime I needed it". Tempering that notion, Jade lamented that when she was not attached to the TPU, "it was all on me, I had to do that myself . . . had to navigate my way through that . . . I'm still young and learning."

In relation to taha wairua, most social support experiences were positive. For Jasmin, the impact was positive "because of knowing the support was there". Jade shared her positive experience of support: "They focus on a lot of Māori aspects . . . They helped me quite a lot. They made my curtains . . . and made sure me and my son and partner were warm, and our house was." Although Walker's experience was predominantly positive, she did experience feeling "a little judged by social services" at times.

This study found taha whānau support from the social sector was not strong overall. Amelia said that social services were "not involved in that bit". This was the case generally, whether māmā Māori were connected to the TPU or not. Most felt that either TPU or whānau support had a greater and more positive impact on their family and social relationships. Walker stated, "I didn't really get social support; it was more from my whānau." Jasmin's comments further attest to the idea that taha whānau support was found in other spaces: "If anything, it would have been the TPU. They were all pretty supportive." Jade,

who experienced a good deal of support, felt that "social services focused on the whole whānau. They wanted to help our wellbeing as a whānau." Jade added that social services "came to my home, and they wanted to meet my whānau . . . The way we communicated was like whānau." The study found that while some participants received a good quality and level of social support, others had to rely on support from other domains (e.g., education and whānau).

The study saw mixed results in relation to the financial support received by the māmā. Two of the research participants, Amelia and Jasmin, related predominantly challenging or a mixture of both positive and less positive experiences related to financial support. Jade's and Walker's experiences were predominantly positive. Jade acknowledged that financial support made it possible for her to "go out and do things with my son . . . [and] afford food and nappies", and Walker felt financial assistance was "quite a relief". Conversely, Jasmin did not believe her experience was positive because she "had to struggle", highlighting the critical nature of financial support in providing a basic quality of life. All māmā Māori shared examples of financial assistance being required to meet their basic human needs for food and shelter, with Jade relying on financial support to "pay for rent and power".

Experiences of financial support in relation to taha hinengaro were also varied. Jade and Walker reported financial support as having a positive impact, affording some financial stability and reducing stress for them. Walker even considered financial assistance "a bit of a bonus". Amelia and Jasmin felt quite differently about accessing financial support and the level of support provided. Amelia indicated that the level of financial support was barely adequate. She felt she was "surviving really; it's not enough". Jasmin echoed this sentiment, saying, "Rent is more than what my actual benefit is." Financial challenge persisted, with Jasmin highlighting the difficulty in "having to live week by week. It shouldn't be like that." In terms of the impact on taha hinengaro, Jasmin felt financial services "make things hard. It causes stress, and you feel like you are failing as a mum."

Financial support experiences were more positive for Jade and Walker, and both identified that they had strong whānau support. Both were living with extended whānau in their family homes. Walker stated that the financial support afforded her "a little bit of freedom [and] meant low stress". Not paying rent meant Walker could

save: "I think I got $300 a week. I would save two and then only spend one."

When looking at financial support in relation to taha wairua, participants' experiences were mixed. While Jasmin made the comment that "having to struggle doesn't feel good", Amelia saw financial support as both "good and bad". She added that it was good as "it lifts your spirits [but] the bad is relying on it". Jade and Walker saw the financial support more positively. Jade mentioned being able to "do the groceries for the whole house", adding "having that feeling of knowing I could provide was good". Walker shared this sentiment, saying, "It's always a good feeling when you can provide." For Walker, the financial support "made me feel like an adult. I could do adult things." The study found that, overall, access to a good level of financial support positively impacted taha wairua for māmā Māori.

All research participants indicated that taha whānau were positively impacted by the financial support they received. For Jade, she felt able to contribute by "being able to do the groceries for my household . . . It helped with my whānau and social relationships." Jasmin commented that financial support meant "being able to do things as a family". Amelia reinforced this: "You're able to go out and do stuff . . . spend time and money with the people you love."

Overall, the study found access, quality and levels of support to be variable in the health, social and financial sectors.

Education support: Holistic support and relationships

The study found that all māmā Māori experienced positive experiences of support in education, and that education support was effective for strengthening holistic wellbeing and success for this group. Jade stated that education support was "the biggest factor for me in my life". Jasmin considered that education "help[ed] with a lot of our young mums", and Walker believed she "learned more here [at the TPU] in my three years than I ever did, anywhere". Each of the research participants revealed their reluctance to come to the TPU when they were first pregnant. Jade described her transition from not having "a good mindset coming here" to "maybe a couple of months went by that I started engaging myself, and they started offering the support needed, and it was great". She went on to say:

Everything that I needed, that I wanted to study, was right here. That was awesome. When I look back on it, it was what I needed. They supported me with everything at the Teen Parent Unit . . . and I still come back here to this day, and they still help me.

In viewing education in relation to strengthening taha tinana, the results were positive. Jade said that "looking back at the opportunities, it was awesome . . . We did PE everyday . . . We competed in a few netball tournaments." Walker fondly recalled that she "loved to just feel young, young and fit". Many of the māmā Māori talked about relationships and connections made at the TPU. Jade commented that "it was great socially with friends and teachers". Walker felt she "could be myself around people that I could relate to about what was going on, everything that was happening". Several TPU teachers were identified by the research participants as building strong relationships and connections with students. Many of the former TPU students continue to visit and connect with their TPU teachers. Jasmin said the TPU teachers provided "a lot of motivation, always pushing us to be successful". In hindsight, she realised that she had not taken full advantage of this: "I just wish I was more into it while I was here." Even Amelia, who was the only research participant still enrolled at the TPU, conceded that compulsory PE was "alright", adding, "I've come to okay it."

When looking at taha hinengaro within education, māmā Māori also experienced positive support. The one exception was Jasmin, who was negatively impacted by COVID-19 mandates, which stymied her attempt to follow her preferred tertiary study path in social work. Jasmin shared only positive experiences related to her experiences within the TPU. Jade felt education support in relation to taha hinengaro "was the one that impacted me the most". All research participants' responses contained a sense of hope in the future, through an education pathway. Amelia was determined to "find a decent job, that you're into". Jasmin is following a business studies pathway, Walker pursuing a teaching career, and Jade accounting. Jade's interview highlighted the positive impact on taha hinengaro for her:

I thought when I was pregnant, I wasn't going to have the same opportunities as someone young without a baby. I thought that I wasn't going to be able to achieve much, that I'll just be a stay-at-home mum on a benefit. And they [the TPU] changed my perspective of that. They told me I could be much more, I could be anything I wanted, I could give

my son whatever I wanted. They helped my mental wellbeing immensely; that's a big impact on my life.

Walker commented, "I think having female teachers—they became like your second mum . . . They were another mother-figure-type support." Jade referred to one of her teachers, saying, "They weren't there for just school; it wasn't just teaching. She wanted to know about you. If you weren't coping on a specific day, she understood that, and it wasn't just shrugged off." The study found holistic support evident within the TPU. This was made visible by māmā Māori reporting positive education support experiences in relation to taha tinana, taha hinengaro, taha wairua and taha whānau. A focus on relationships and connection was also clear, with Jade's words summing up a common sentiment: "It was awesome. It was great socially with friends and teachers."

Taha wairua featured prominently in the research participants' experience of education support. Jade talked about the TPU encouraging students to set "goals and aspirations in life". She later added that she felt attending noho marae impacted her taha wairua positively: "A lot of Māori students here took leadership and that was awesome. That connected us." Walker thought taha wairua was being supported within the TPU, saying that "it was great having all the support we needed . . . It made us feel great, like we belonged here. We felt safe." Jasmin also felt taha wairua was supported within the TPU. For her, "It was like a comfortable space, felt like my second home." She also acknowledged that education support has "helped my confidence a bit as I suffer from PTSD and quite bad anxiety".

When looking at education support in relation to taha whānau, holistic support was made visible in this study. Amelia believed that "it's made me closer with my family". Jade, meanwhile, has "created lifelong friendships with the girls [and believes] that's all because of being here". Jasmin's experience was similar, and she felt the TPU was instrumental in developing and strengthening taha whānau. She put it down to "having to all work together . . . It brings everyone together as one." Not only have Jasmin's social relationships been positively impacted within the TPU setting, but her relationship with her mum has also improved. Jasmin commented that "being here matured me, and being a mum matured me . . . Now me and my mum don't even argue." Walker also mentioned TPU involvement in supporting taha whānau: "They even helped my partner. Helping partners is helping us." Jade agreed, saying, "The TPU helped with that, a lot of it was building relationships."

The importance of whānau support

Māmā Māori experienced predominantly positive experiences in relation to whānau support. Overall, results showed more positive experiences of whānau support than in the other kinds of support explored in the study.

Amelia and Jasmin revealed that there was an initial lack of support, but that changed to be much more positive during their pregnancy or following the birth of their first child. Amelia shared her experience: "They found out I was pregnant, and it was chaos. They weren't supportive at the start, but they eventually came around. The second time around they were definitely better—it was completely fine." Amelia and Jasmin revealed that there had been challenges in their relationships with whānau prior to attending the TPU. Jade and Walker mentioned several times during their interview that their experiences of whānau support were positive. Jade said, "You have other support systems, but I think whānau is the main one that you need."

When looking at taha tinana in relation to whānau support, the impact was positive for all the research participants. Walker said, "That kind of support is very normal in my family", and she expressed gratitude for whānau support: "There are so many mums that don't get any support, or can't do anything." Amelia shared her experience of whānau supporting taha tinana: "When I was living there, Mum cooked, and Dad, and me." For Jade, whānau support included "being able to do stuff with whānau . . . It always makes it more fun with family." Jade saw whānau supporting taha tinana in sharing meals too: "I think that's a way of feeling connected with Māori . . . being able to share kai and being able to come together. And yeah, have a laugh." Jasmin's experience of whānau supporting taha tinana is illustrated in the following comment: "Me and my aunty both wanted to go to the gym and having each other meant we could go together . . . We're both able to be each other's motivator." Whānau support was particularly important in this instance, as Jasmin explained: "My aunty, we both, well, all my family suffer from anxiety." This study illustrates the importance of having whānau support and the positive impact it has on taha tinana.

Taha hinengaro was positively impacted by whānau support. Jade shared an example: "You have your odd days where you don't feel too good or you have self-doubt, but my whānau are always

there to support me." Jasmin felt assured "just knowing I have their support". Amelia expressed similar thoughts: "I guess it's good having family support. I just feel like my mental side is much better now because of it." Walker believed taha hinengaro to be well supported by whānau: "We get so much love, we can give it away . . . pay it forward."

When looking at taha wairua in relation to whānau support, most participants reported a positive impact on their wairua. Jasmin did not have good whānau support with her first child and found the impact of this made for "one of the hardest times of my life". Since having her first child, whānau support has improved for Jasmin: "It's been good since then." Amelia articulated whānau support of taha wairua simply: "Having the support makes you feel like, I don't know, it's just good." Jade believed her taha wairua had been impacted significantly by whānau support. Referring to traditional Māori birthing practices, she said, "With whānau they have given me opportunities, made me realise things could be different."

Taha whānau was found to be positively impacted by whānau support. Just one research participant indicated that there was both a positive and a negative aspect to this. Amelia felt the positive aspect was that whānau "help with situations". The negative aspect was that "they overstep sometimes". Jade, Jasmin and Walker relayed only positive aspects of whānau support for the wellbeing of family and social relationships. Jasmin said, "We're definitely a close family, and definitely a lot closer now. Becoming a mum helped." Jade considered taha whānau to be positively impacted by whānau support and enjoyed "just being connected, being together, filling your cup up". She added, "You have your disputes here and there, but they're always going to be there, through school, through life, obstacles, achievements. They're always there."

Discussion

Health, social and financial support: Access, quality and level

This study found the access, quality and levels of support experienced by māmā Māori in health, social, and financial sectors to be variable. In the context of this discussion, access, quality and level of support relates to research participant experiences of health, social and financial sector support only. In terms of access, this study found these three areas of support were accessed through either whānau or education. Findings suggest equitable access to health, social and financial support is possible within the TPU setting and that it strengthens holistic wellbeing and supports māmā Māori success. Access to support outside of a TPU is unknown and was not the focus of this study.

The critical nature of holistic support for Māori health and wellbeing is recognised by many researchers (Adcock, 2016; Allen & Clarke, 2019; Clifford-Lidstone & Ryan, 2013; Graham, 2018; Ministry for Women, 2018; Pio & Graham, 2016; Rawiri, 2007; Strickett & Moewaka-Barnes, 2012). Access to support is the starting point, and it is fundamental to achieving successful outcomes for this group.

In discussing these variable quality and levels of support in the context of Aotearoa, it is worth considering them in terms of culturally responsive practice within the health sector (Māori Cultural Responsiveness Project Team, 2010). Culturally responsive practice was almost non-existent in the experiences shared by the māmā Māori involved in this study. In addition, study findings reinforce the idea of wraparound support being important (Allen & Clarke, 2019; Ministry for Women, 2018; Strickett & Moewaka-Barnes, 2012). Financial support was found to significantly strengthen māmā Māori holistic wellbeing but was only accessible through whānau or education. This suggests connecting links between different areas of support are necessary. The fact that holistic, wraparound support is delivered at variable levels must be of concern when considering the effectiveness of individual sectors of support.

Adcock's (2016) research makes the link between empathetic, respectful relationships and positive outcomes in health sector support. The findings of this study reinforce this. Where relationships and connection were central to the support, experiences were positive. When support sector staff did not prioritise their relationships with māmā Māori, research participant experiences were not positive. In addition, some māmā Māori did experience discrimination and judgement, as evidenced in the personal examples shared within their pūrākau. Support provided must involve high-quality practice that is free of discrimination and judgement (Allen & Clarke, 2019; Ministry for Women, 2018).

Education support: Holistic support and relationships

Māmā Māori experiences within education show that holistic support and relationships featured strongly. Graham (2018) suggests that "the success

of young Māori mothers within environments of supportive whānau, extends to their success in social, health, education and employment opportunities" (p. 235). The importance of holistic support is therefore clear. When considering holistic support in the context of this study, it consisted of health, social, financial, education and whānau support. Hauora, when considered in terms of Te Whare Tapa Whā (Durie, 1984) and in the context of Māori health and wellbeing in Aotearoa, must be holistic.

Taha tinana, taha hinengaro, taha wairua and taha whānau were all positively impacted by experiences of support within education. Relationships featured strongly within education sector support. The study found that relationships within the education sector, and within the TPU specifically, were central to positive experiences for māmā Māori. The positive correlation between education sector support and relationships was clear through this study.

Holistic support and/or relationships have been found to be important factors in realising successful outcomes for māmā Māori (Adcock, 2016; Allen & Clarke, 2019; Clifford-Lidstone & Ryan, 2013; Graham, 2018; Ministry for Women, 2018; Pihema, 2017; Pio & Graham, 2016; Rawiri, 2007; Strickett & Moewaka-Barnes, 2012). This study asserts that where education support is evident, a positive foundation for holistic wellbeing and success is created.

The importance of whānau support

The importance of whānau support and its value in strengthening māmā Māori holistic wellbeing was evident from this study. For Māori, the importance of whānau is a cultural tenet: "Ko te whānau ko au, ko au ko te whānau — I am the whānau, the whānau is me" (Moeke-Pickering, 1996, p. 9). The importance of whānau support is critical to successful outcomes for māmā Māori (Graham, 2018; Strickett & Moewaka-Barnes, 2012). Historically, and from a te ao Māori perspective, whānau support represents collective support in relation to raising tamariki (Moeke-Pickering, 1996). This study found that the greater the whānau support, the greater the holistic wellbeing and success experienced by the māmā Māori involved.

This study reaffirms the critical importance of whānau support. The existing literature supports this and suggests the importance of whānau cannot be underestimated (Allen & Clarke, 2019; Boulton & Gifford, 2014; Strickett & Moewaka-Barnes, 2012; Ware, 2014). Boulton and Gifford (2014) found that the success and wellbeing of tamariki and mokopuna is a driving force for Māori parents in raising them. Ware (2014) agrees, taking this idea a step further by creating an approach to support Māori parents to successfully parent. The Whānau Kōpepe approach (Ware, 2014) sees successful parenting through a mātauranga Māori lens and situates whānau as integral and central for success.

This study found that connecting links exist between whānau support and other areas (i.e., health, social, financial and education support). In addition, the study showed that whānau support positively impacts *all* four holistic wellbeing domains that were investigated. The critical role whānau play in supporting māmā Māori holistic wellbeing and success is clear from the study findings.

Conclusion

The findings of this study clearly show that education and whānau support were effective in strengthening holistic wellbeing and success for māmā Māori. However, an in-depth look at māmā Māori experiences of health, social and financial support revealed these to be variable and less effective overall. The study also highlights a need for a holistic, wraparound and integrated approach to support for māmā Māori.

Historically, Māori have demonstrated strength in continuously resisting colonial oppression, highlighting a strong survival instinct (Boulton & Gifford, 2014; Durie, 2006). In the face of challenge, the māmā Māori who took part in this research were working to further their education. They were increasing their capacity to provide opportunities for themselves, their tamariki and their whānau. Findings presented in this article add to an ever-increasing body of Indigenous research undertaken in Aotearoa that highlights inequities for Māori and a need for change (Adcock, 2016; Allen & Clarke, 2019; Boulton & Gifford, 2014; Clifford-Lidstone & Ryan, 2013; Graham, 2018; Pihema, 2017; Pio & Graham, 2016; Rawiri, 2007). It is hoped that the study presented here will encourage more research on the wellbeing of māmā Māori, beyond the walls of one TPU. The findings should prompt us to consider how we currently support this precariat group, and the ways in which we can do better.

Glossary

Aotearoa	lit. "land of the long white cloud"; Māori name for New Zealand

hauora	health and wellbeing
kai	food
kairangahau	researcher
kaupapa	plan, purpose
Kaupapa Māori	a "by Māori, for Māori, with Māori" approach to research
māmā	mother
mana	personal power
Māori	Indigenous peoples/ cultures of Aotearoa
mātauranga Māori	Māori knowledge
mokopuna	grandchildren
noho marae	overnight stay at a Māori meeting ground, or marae
pou	pillar, post, support
pūrākau	narratives, stories
taha hinengaro	mental and emotional (side) health and wellbeing
taha tinana	physical (side) health and wellbeing
taha wairua	spiritual (side) health and wellbeing
taha whānau	whānau and social relationship (side) health and wellbeing
tamariki	children
taonga	treasure
te ao Māori	the Māori world; Māori worldview
tihei mauri ora	lit. "the breath of life" (te ao Māori concept related to the creation of humanity)
whakawhanaungatanga	the process of developing familial relationships
whānau	holistic approach to family that is wider than immediate family members

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