AN EXPLORATION OF PASIFIKA MULTIGENERATIONAL SOCIAL HOUSING

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This research explores Pasifika multigenerational social housing, defined as the cohabitation of three or more generations. With nearly a quarter of the Pasifika population residing in such extended family situations, the study aims to scrutinize whether the current social housing infrastructure adequately meets their needs. The research, which employed a case study approach, focused on a Pasifika Community Housing provider working predominantly with Pasifika as a cohort and operating large numbers of social housing properties across Auckland. Document analysis and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders were the main data collection methods. The results suggest a significant misalignment between existing multigenerational housing structures and the actual needs of the Pasifika community. The interview data indicates that the current housing framework falls short of meeting the unique requirements of Pasifika households, hence necessitating a redesign of multigenerational housing to align with the diverse lifestyles and preferences of its occupants. The study highlights the inadequacy of a 'one size fits all' approach, emphasizing the need for tailor-made designs reflective of the communities residing in multigenerational housing. In conclusion, policymakers should consider a more inclusive and culturally sensitive approach to the design and implementation of Pasifika multigenerational housing solutions in New Zealand.

Keywords: Pasifika communities, Intergenerational, Affordable housing, Culturally sensitive design.

1 INTRODUCTION

Multigenerational housing (MGH), characterized by three or more generations cohabiting, has become a growing international trend in Western societies (Lysnar 2017, Lysnar and Dupuis 2015). The prevalence of MGH, which is driven by diverse factors (Burgess and Muir 2020) emphasizes the importance of identifying and addressing specific needs associated with such living (Burnley *et al.* 2016). Despite the acknowledged necessity for collaboration in addressing MGH-related challenges (Burnley *et al.* 2016), there remains a notable gap in research specific to Aotearoa New Zealand, especially when viewed through a cultural lens. The focus on Pasifika MGH is prompted by a quarter of the Pasifika population in New Zealand residing in extended family situations (Stats NZ 2023). This demographic reality underscores the urgency for homes that accommodate not only the spatial requirements of MGH but also the cultural nuances, such as the need for spaces to host cultural and family engagements. The complexity of MGH, ranging from smaller to larger family units, demands a nuanced approach to address the diverse needs within this housing paradigm (Lysnar and Dupuis 2015, Munford *et al.* 2009). Moreover, the prevalence of social housing in areas attracting lower-income populations often results in housing that may not be fit for purpose, with adverse impacts on the well-being of residents (Braubach

and Fairburn 2010). A significant reason for Pasifika individuals being on the social housing register is the inadequacy or unsuitability of their current accommodations (Stats NZ 2023).

This research seeks to evaluate the specific needs of Pasifika individuals residing in MGH, examining the interplay of cultural factors within the context of social housing. With a particular emphasis on Pasifika multigenerational social housing, the study aims to explore avenues for improving living conditions and outcomes for this specific cohort. The main research question of this study is, "How can multigenerational social housing be improved to meet the needs of Pasifika?" The three sub-questions examine the key factors contributing to MGH construction, the alignment of housing allocation with Pasifika needs, and the potential enhancement of design features to address the unique requirements of this community. This paper contributes to the discourse on MGH by offering a culturally sensitive exploration of Pasifika multigenerational social housing in Aotearoa New Zealand and aims to inform policies and interventions that enhance the well-being of Pasifika individuals living in these unique housing arrangements.

2   RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODS

The study employed a case study research approach. An Auckland-based Pasifika Community Housing Provider (CHP) established in 2001 was chosen as a case study. This organization transitioned into a registered CHP in 2017, specializing in social housing with a mission to enhance holistic wellness for Pasifika communities. The Pasifika CHP manages 245 houses across 24 sites, primarily in South Auckland, including residences representing multigenerational households. The case study examined the strategies, challenges, and outcomes of this CHP in meeting the needs of Pasifika individuals within MGH settings. The research used multiple data sources, including public, private, and interview data. A document analysis framework was used for each public and private data – the information was recorded and analyzed in a matrix format based on the main research question and sub-questions. The selected interviewees included key management figures from the case study CHP, alongside representatives from a government and a non-government agency collaborating with the CHP in social housing delivery. The interview data was collected from recorded MS Teams meetings and manually edited transcripts and then compiled into a matrix aligned with the study's research questions.

3   FINDINGS

3.1   Key Factors Driving Multigenerational Social Housing Construction

Approximately a quarter of the Pasifika population in Aotearoa New Zealand embraces a lifestyle characterized by multigenerational or extended family living (Stats NZ 2023). As the country's demographic landscape undergoes the effects of ageing, there is a foreseen surge in the older Pasifika demographic. In response to this evolving trend and the evident preference of Pasifika individuals for such arrangements, MGH is anticipated to play a pivotal role in addressing future housing needs. Larger dwellings featuring four bedrooms, or more are likely to be essential to cater to the distinctive needs of Pacific peoples, diverging from the national average (Stats NZ 2023). The success of MGH living hinges on a comprehensive understanding of both its physical (construction and design of MGHs) and social dimensions (experiences of people living in MGHs) (Lysnar and Dupuis 2015).

The overwhelming consensus among the interviewees was that cultural and financial considerations drive individuals to choose MGH. The participants consistently cited "*financial advantage*" (Participants B and D), the "*pooling of resources*" (Participant A), and the distinctly "*cultural*" aspect (Participant C) as key factors. Interestingly, several interviewees pointed out

that the Social Housing Register does not accurately capture or acknowledge MGH as a specific housing category (Participants C and D) and noted that families sometimes misrepresent their housing situation due to the belief they won't secure a larger house (Participant A). The role of private landlords in building MGH for CHPs elicited mixed responses. One participant advocated for incentivizing and supporting landlords (Participant A), while another expressed skepticism, indicating that private landlords play a role "*in very limited circumstances; landlords often exhibit reluctance to rent to two specific groups—youth and larger families*" (Participant C).

Divergent opinions emerged regarding the need for specialized builders in MGH construction. While Participant A believed it unnecessary, Participant B thought having a Pasifika builder could deliver a product attuned to the specific needs. This contrasted with the unanimous agreement that specialized architects are crucial for MGH, with participants emphasizing the importance of architects who understand and incorporate cultural needs into their designs.

3.2 Housing Allocation and the Needs of Pasifika Tenants

A significant factor prompting individuals to register for social housing is the inadequacy of their current accommodations; there was also a nearly twofold increase in mentions of homelessness (Stats NZ 2023). The data also suggests that Pacific people, residing in larger families and homes that do not align with their needs face heightened challenges associated with overcrowding. The social housing register illustrates a recent surge in demand for housing among Pasifika communities (MSD 2023). However, it falls short in explaining housing typologies and does not ascertain whether MGH is a specific requirement or if families aspire to cohabit within an MGH arrangement. Furthermore, the data highlights a pressing need for 837 homes with four to five bedrooms, though it does not analyze the ethnic composition of this demand (MSD 2023).

The interviewees' opinions were divided regarding the effectiveness of the social housing register in representing the needs related to MGH. Some participants expressed the need for a more interconnected approach, advocating for the linking of families desiring to reside together rather than recording them separately. Concurrently, the absence of overcrowding statistics in the social housing register was highlighted as a notable gap (Participants A, C, and D). MGH was seen as a solution to address overcrowding in social housing. The participants voiced support for MGH as a means of assistance for Pasifika and Māori cohorts to resolve the widespread issue of overcrowding across various housing tenures and maintain language and cultural identity.

3.3 Design Characteristics/Features Contributing to Effective Multigenerational Living

Photographic evidence from residences either completed or under construction provided by the study's CHP showcase design elements such as ramps and level-entry access, addressing accessibility concerns for older individuals within the MGH framework. Wet area bathrooms are incorporated to cater to the needs of older occupants living in MGH, demonstrating an inclusive approach. The design also encompasses spacious open-plan kitchens, providing a conducive environment for communal cooking and dining. To ensure privacy within the multigenerational setting, breakout spaces are strategically incorporated. Furthermore, the design caters to the practical needs of MGH by providing additional on-site parking and communal spaces. The participants unanimously recognized that MGH is not a 'one-size-fits-all' approach, emphasizing the need for tailored homes that align with diverse family dynamics and emphasized the necessity of bespoke designs reflecting the way people live (Participant A) and catering to cultural needs (Participant B). When examining the cultural and spatial requirements of MGH, the importance of incorporating design elements that align with these needs became evident.

Privacy, breakout spaces, and amenities such as larger kitchens were identified as crucial factors by all participants. Cooking together emerged as a communal activity, especially significant, particularly when hosting gatherings. In terms of location, unanimous agreement among participants emphasized the importance of proximity to schools, workplaces, shops, medical centers, playgrounds, daycare facilities, larger outdoor spaces, and communal areas in MGH living. Parking, including the utilization of garages for social purposes, was identified as a critical demand factor. When discussing design aspects, all participants found the concept of a 'granny flat' and duplex houses with a shared door for MGH as a favorable solution. However, the consensus was against 3-level housing, with concerns raised about its suitability.

Turning to the role of the government in MGH and home ownership, participants unanimously called for government involvement. They expressed the need for the government to deliver MGH solutions as a pathway out of poverty and support both the encouragement of home ownership and Pasifika individuals owning larger homes through Progressive Home Ownership.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Cultural and Socioeconomic Factors Driving MGH

The research findings highlight cultural factors as a primary motivation for individuals choosing to embrace an MGH arrangement. Furthermore, socioeconomic factors play a substantial role in this trend. These findings are consistent with the literature stating that financial considerations as a response to MGH living are recognized as influential (Burgess and Muir 2020, Easthope *et al.* 2017, Liu and Easthope 2012). Conversely, caregiving for the elderly did not emerge prominently as a motivating factor in the study's findings, despite being considered a valuable advantage in relation to MGH, according to Gerards *et al.* (2015). The highest levels of MGH prevalence were found among the 80–84-year-old Pacific population, emphasizing the trend of older Pasifika family members residing within MGH housing arrangements (Stats NZ 2023).

The study further stresses the unmet cultural and spatial needs of Pasifika communities, emphasizing the importance of specific designers capable of interpreting and delivering to the unique requirements of MGH. New and unique housing designs are needed to recognize that MGH should accommodate diverse needs rather than catering to a singular demographic. Universal designs prove essential in ensuring adaptability to changing family dynamics (Liu and Easthope 2012, Parker 2000). Contrary to the interviewees' strong stance that specialized builders are unnecessary in MGH construction, the absence of builders focusing solely on MGH in New Zealand is noted in the literature (Lysnar and Dupuis 2015). This stands in contrast to the role of architects, where a clear consensus suggests that an architect understanding the cultural nuances reflective in designs is crucial for creating MGH homes. City planning recognizes the diversity of housing requirements (Burnley *et al.* 2016).

In summary, the findings reveal a complex interplay of cultural, socioeconomic, and caregiving factors driving the rise of MGH. While financial considerations and caregiving for the elderly play a role, the unmet cultural and spatial needs of Pasifika communities highlight the necessity for specialized designers and universal designs in MGH housing developments. The absence of dedicated builders for MGH is contrasted with the recognized importance of architects who comprehend the cultural complexity involved.

4.2 Integrating Housing Policies with Cultural Preservation

The research findings emphasize the inadequacy of the current social housing register in pinpointing MGH as a specific area of need within the broader social housing context. The

register has grown significantly since 2017, influenced by various factors such as housing supply and affordability constraints (Stats NZ 2023). Notably, overcrowding emerges as a prominent concern, with the potential for improvement through the development of MGH. Addressing overcrowding issues requires the incorporation of good universal design principles to resolve conflicts arising from crowding and privacy concerns within MGH settings. Recognizing these considerations during the design phase can significantly contribute to an improved quality of life (Parker 2000).

Moreover, there exists a crucial link between the living environment, specifically MGH settings, and the preservation of Pacific languages and cultural identity. For Pacific children to acquire and retain proficiency in a Pacific language, residing in an MGH setting is deemed pivotal. The transmission of language and culture is intrinsically tied to the living conditions, emphasizing the interconnectedness of housing and cultural sustainability (Stats NZ 2023). Therefore, comprehensive strategies that integrate housing policies with cultural preservation efforts are imperative for fostering a supportive environment for Pacific communities.

4.3 Bespoke Housing Designs Aligned with Family Dynamics

The study's findings strongly suggest that MGH cannot adopt a 'one size fits all' approach. Instead, MGH designs should be bespoke, tailored to accommodate and align with the spatial requirements of larger Pacific families, reflecting the intricacies of their interactions. Housing designs must adapt to the evolving dynamics of extended family living, considering the increasing lifespan and cohabitation of multiple generations (Parker 2000). Understanding MGH requires a comprehensive approach, encompassing policy, design, and delivery, which is crucial to acknowledging the lived experiences of those residing in such arrangements (Lysnar and Dupuis 2015). The interview participants widely endorsed the notion that home characteristics should align with family dynamics. Privacy, breakout spaces, and amenities like expansive kitchens were unanimously recognized as critical considerations in MGH settings. The inclusion of flexible spaces that prioritize privacy (Burgess and Muir 2020) is directly influenced by design choices (Parker 2000). However, the existing designs often fall short of meeting the unique needs of MGH (Burgess and Muir 2020, Easthope *et al*. 2015).

The interviewees' preferences included features such as a 'granny flat' arrangement, widely supported for its flexibility, and a duplex configuration, with a shared door facilitating communal living when desired. Additionally, apartment living with adjoining units featuring a dual-key arrangement and a shared entranceway was recognized as essential for MGH, particularly for families desiring proximity (Lui and Easthope 2012). The importance of recognizing and implementing these diverse design options is crucial for fostering environments that truly meet the unique needs of Pasifika MGH.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The study's findings suggest the need for improvements in MGH within the context of social housing for Pasifika communities, signaling a pathway toward more effective and targeted outcomes. The important role of design, particularly when informed by cultural and spatial considerations, emerges as a critical factor in addressing the unique needs of Pasifika within MGH living situations. Moreover, there is a disconnect evident in the social housing register, which fails to identify MGH as a specific need, particularly for families opting to live together for various reasons. With an ageing Pasifika population favoring MGH living, there is a foreseeable increase in demand for such housing, necessitating a proactive exploration of diverse housing options to adequately cater to this evolving need. Recognizing the evolving dynamics of housing

preferences and the cultural significance of multigenerational living is essential for a comprehensive and inclusive approach to meet the housing needs of Pasifika effectively.

Stakeholders need to bridge the identified gaps and implement measures that align with the cultural and spatial requirements of Pasifika communities in the context of MGH. Government involvement is crucial in both MGH and home ownership, emphasizing the need for supportive policies to address the housing requirements of Pasifika communities.

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