

Celebrating Achievements and Excellence



FNU May Graduation Phd graduates, (from left) Dr Atish Chand, Dr Sereima Baleisomi and Dr Viliame Cagivinaka Taginasedrau.
Photo Credits: Meti Kolinisau

WHAT'S INSIDE

- PAGE 2**
 - FNU Celebrates Three PhD Graduates
 - Double Delight for Boginivalu
 - Gold medalist continues family legacy
- PAGE 3**
 - Sacrifice Leads to Gold
 - Years of sacrifice pays offs
 - Determined to Rise Higher
- PAGE 4**
 - Rokosuka Leads Family Achievement
 - Self-Funding His Education Journey
- PAGE 5**
 - Teachers must be Patient: Prasad
 - A Mother's Love Never Fades
- PAGE 6**
 - From Student to Teacher: Jieni Returns to Rotuma to Inspire Students
 - Zens Medical CEO Highlights Time Management as Key to Achieving Success
- PAGE 7**
 - Advocacy for Safer, Healthier and More Productive Workplaces
 - Conference Highlights Hidden Cost of Workplace Stress
- PAGE 8**
 - Naivalulevu Aims Better Health for Rural Communities.
- PAGE 9**
 - Tamani Makes Family proud

FNU Celebrates Three PhD Graduates

By **ROMEKA KUMARI**

The Fiji National University (FNU) has proudly congratulated its Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) graduates from the 2026 May Graduation ceremony.

From the College of Humanities, Education and Law (CHEL), Sereima Baleisomi and Vilive Cagivinaka Taginasedrau successfully completed their PhD in Education.

Sereima Baleisomi's thesis

was titled "*Siga Damu A Vanua*' – Weaving Hope Through Culturally Relevant and Responsive Mathematics Education in Fiji Primary Schools."

Vilive Cagivinaka Taginasedrau's thesis was titled "*Teacher Education in Fiji: Na Yavutu – A Fijian Approach to Teacher Education.*"

Meanwhile, Atish Chand became the first student to graduate with a PhD under the Australian Centre for International Agricultural

Research (ACIAR) Pacific Agriculture Scholarships and Support (PASS) programme.

Atish Chand graduated from the College of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (CAFF), with a thesis titled "*Value Chain Analysis and Climate Change Intervention in the Fijian Dairy Industry.*"

"The ACIAR PASS Programme provided strong capacity building and training opportunities that significantly enhanced my academic and professional development," Chand said.



Honouring Heritage Through Education

By WATI TALEBULA

Graduation day at the Fiji National University marked a profound and emotional milestone for Eroni Daunibau Navunisaravi, who graduated with a Postgraduate Diploma in Business Entrepreneurship and Management.

The occasion was described as a deeply reflective moment as he crossed the graduation dais with pride and quiet emotion, in the absence of his parents who were unable to attend the ceremony.

“Their physical absence was

felt strongly, but I carried them with me in my heart,” Eroni said.

“Every sacrifice they made, every prayer and every word of encouragement gave me the strength to reach this milestone.”

Eroni’s traditional attire, the ‘*Vakadivilivili*’, worn during the ceremony, carried deep cultural significance to Batiki in Lomaiviti and his Vuvale Matakibau of Naisausau, Namara, Tailevu, symbolising identity, heritage, and ancestral connection.

“*The Vakadivilivili* represents my identity, my people and my

roots,” he said. “It reminds me that no matter where life takes me, I remain connected to my land and my vanua.”

His journey reflects humble beginnings, from life in a small leanto house to the establishment of a family home named Nabuakala, symbolising perseverance and resilience through years of sacrifice.

“Coming from where we started, this achievement is not mine alone,” he added.

“It belongs to my family, my forefathers, and everyone who supported me along the way.”



Eroni Daunibau Navunisaravi, who graduated with a Postgraduate Diploma in Business Entrepreneurship and Management.

Photo Credit: Romeka Kumari

Double Delight for Boginivalu

By ROMEKA KUMARI

It was a day of double celebration for Vasemaca Boginivalu.

Boginivalu scooped the gold medal award for the most outstanding student in the Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice (GDLP) programme. The achievement came just days after she was admitted to the High Court Bar during the bar admission ceremony on Friday, 8 May 2026.

Hailing from Nasau, Wainibuka in Tailevu, with

maternal links to Nukuni village in Ono-i-Lau, Boginivalu dedicated the achievement to God and her family.

“I thank the Almighty God for blessing me throughout my journey at FNU,” an emotional Boginivalu shared.

“My parents were always with me through thick and thin, encouraging me throughout my studies.”

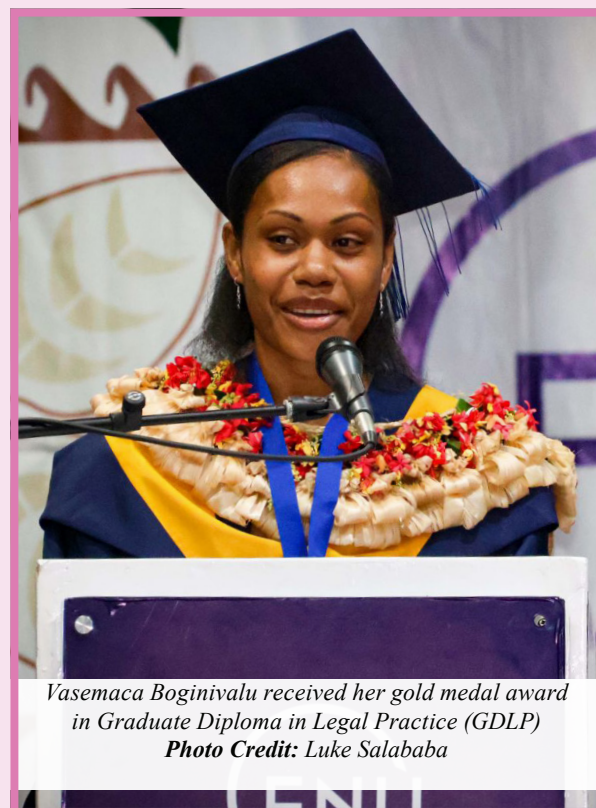
“The admission to the bar and then this gold medal came at the right time as a surprise

not just for me but for my family as well.”

Boginivalu said her journey at FNU was filled with challenges, but it helped shape her into a stronger person.

“My journey was not easy, but it allowed me to take on challenges one step at a time,” she said.

“Challenges came in terms of time management because we had assignments due and also having to balance studies with my family, but all-in-all it paid off well.”



Vasemaca Boginivalu received her gold medal award in Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice (GDLP)

Photo Credit: Luke Salababa

Gold Medalist Continues Family Legacy

By ROMEKA KUMARI

For Muhammad Zaahir, graduating with a Bachelor of Education (Secondary) majoring in Mathematics and Physics was already a proud achievement, but receiving the gold medal award made the moment even more special.

The milestone was celebrated during the May Graduation.

Originally from Rarawai in Ba, the 23-year-old comes from a family of educators, with both his parents serving as primary school teachers in the football-crazy town.

“I am really happy to graduate and at the same time take home the gold medal

award,” Zaahir said.

“Becoming a teacher was always a dream that ignited in me since childhood because both my parents are teachers and they encouraged me to pursue secondary school teaching.”

The eldest of three siblings said his passion for Mathematics and Physics developed from a young age.

“It’s my love for solving equations since my primary school days,” he said.

“At first, I found Mathematics tough, but I kept challenging myself that I could solve problems. When I joined secondary school, I found Physics even more

challenging, so I took that up as my second favourite subject.”

Zaahir believes students often shy away from Mathematics and Physics because they view the subjects as difficult.

“Mathematics and Physics are not as hard as we think. If you get the basics of equations right, then problem-solving becomes easy,” he said.

“I am really happy to graduate and at the same time take home the gold medal award,”



Muhammad Zaahir

Photo Credit: Romeka Kumari

Sacrifice Leads to Gold

By WATI TALEBULA

Archana Devi temporarily gave up her dream of completing school so her younger siblings could continue their education after the passing of their mother in 2006.

The 38-year-old from Matallevu in Tavua graduated with a Certificate in Agriculture (Level 3). Her achievement becomes even more remarkable as she was also awarded a gold medal for her outstanding academic performance.

In 2006, while in Year 13, her life changed suddenly

after the passing of her mother.

“When my mum passed away, all the responsibility was on me,” she said.

“I had to look after my three younger siblings. I had to make sure that they finished school before I could continue with my own education.”

Faced with the burden of supporting her family, Devi made the difficult decision to put her own studies on hold so her siblings could continue theirs.

Despite the challenges, she never gave up on her dream of education.

Years later, she returned

to pursue studies in agriculture, determined to build a better future for herself and her family. Her hard work paid off as she excelled in her studies and emerged as one of the top graduates in her programme.

“I am very happy and thankful to God for guiding me through this,” she shared.

“Mum must be proud of me today.”

Devi said the journey was not easy, but her siblings and the memory of her mother motivated her to keep going.

She is currently pursuing her Diploma in Agriculture.



Archana Devi

Photo Credit: Meti Kolinisau

Years of Sacrifice Pays Off

By WATI TALEBULA

Lecturer at Atoifi Adventist College of Nursing in the Solomon Islands, Vunivesi Asugeni from Malaita Province, has graduated with a Postgraduate Diploma in Public Health.

Asugeni described the achievement as the result of years of hard work and sacrifice, saying the moment was both emotional and fulfilling. He expressed gratitude to God and acknowledged the support system that carried him through his studies.

“It’s a great experience today, I have worked a lot to be here. I thank God for guiding me and for my

family, my wife and everyone that supported me,” he said.

However, he also shared the disappointment of not having his family physically present at the graduation due to financial challenges that prevented them from travelling to Fiji.

Despite this, Asugeni said the occasion remained meaningful, especially with the presence of friends who supported him on the day. His close friend Mensah Lazarus, also from the Solomon Islands.

As a lecturer at Atoifi Adventist College of Nursing, Asugeni plays a key role in training and mentoring future nurses in the Solomon Islands. His academic achievement further

strengthens his contribution to the health sector as he continues to build his expertise.

He is currently pursuing a Master in Public Health.

Reflecting on his journey, Asugeni said education had required resilience, discipline and sacrifice, especially while balancing work and distance from family. He encouraged others to remain focused despite challenges, noting that perseverance is essential for success.

“I hope to use my qualification to improve health services in the Solomon Islands and continue inspiring young health professionals in the region.”



Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources, Honourable Filimoni Vosarogo photographed with Vunivesi Asugeni

Photo Credit: Luke Salababa

By NICOLETTE CHAMBERS

Wati Talebula is breaking barriers for her family and village as the first in her family to pursue higher education.

Originally from Nasoki Village in Moala, Lau, Talebula graduated with a Postgraduate Diploma in Social Policy and is currently pursuing a Master of Arts in Social Policy at Fiji National University (FNU), while serving as a Public Relations and Communications Specialist at the institution.

A former Fiji Sun

journalist, she has transitioned from shaping media narratives to contributing to academic and institutional storytelling.

“I see this achievement as breaking barriers not just for myself, but for my family and my village,” she said.

Balancing work, study and family responsibilities was challenging, but Talebula credits her support system for keeping her motivated throughout the journey.

Her graduation was also deeply emotional following the passing of her close friend, Jone Mary Salusalu, in February this year.

“I wish he was here. He was one of the people who always encouraged me and looked forward to this day. His memory is part of this achievement,” she shared.

Talebula dedicated her success to her daughter, Lydia Clement Kazwala, her parents, Jiujiua Waqa and Jokapeci Bogitolu, and her siblings, whom she describes as her constant motivation.

“This is just one step. There is still so much more I want to learn and give back. My goal is to be the first PhD graduate in my village,” she said.



Wati Talebula with her daughter, Lydia Clement Kazwala, and her mother, Jokapeci Bogitolu, during her graduation on May 12, 2026.

Photo Credit: Roshel Singh

Determined to Rise Higher



Rokosuka Leads Family Achievement

By WATI TALEBULA

For Stevi Bonett Rokosuka, graduating with a Certificate in Agriculture (Level 3) from the Fiji National University (FNU) is more than just earning a qualification.

She is the first from her clan (mataqali) to graduate from a tertiary institution.

Rokosuka hails from Nasoki Village, Moala in Lau with maternal links to Nakavu Village in Namosi.

“It feels very rewarding and meaningful to be the first on my paternal side to graduate from a tertiary institution,” Rokosuka shared proudly.

“I feel proud because it represents not only my hard work and determination, but also the hopes and sacrifices of my family.”

Being the first in her family to achieve tertiary education came with both pride and responsibility.

Throughout her studies, the



Stevi Bonett Rokosuka with proud parents Iliesa Saisainibaravi and Akata Liku Tauleka
Photo Credit: Supplied

19-year-old remained motivated by the thought of inspiring younger relatives and showing others in her family that higher education is possible.

“At times the journey was challenging, but knowing that I could set an example for my younger relatives and open new opportunities for future generations kept me motivated,” she said.

Like many students, Stevi encountered obstacles during her academic journey. One of the major challenges she faced was balancing multiple assignments and responsibilities while managing her time effectively.

“At first, I felt overwhelmed and kept procrastinating, which made things more stressful,” she explained.

“To overcome it, I started using

a planner and breaking big tasks into smaller steps. I also set priorities and gave myself specific times to study and rest.”

Rokosuka credits much of her success to the unwavering support of her parents and extended family, including the Rokosuka family abroad, who stood by her throughout her educational journey.

“I would like to thank my parents for their support and also the Rokosuka family abroad,” she said gratefully.

Reflecting on her experience at FNU, Stevi encourages future students to consider the university because of the opportunities it provides.

“I recommend FNU because it has more opportunities than other universities,” she said.

Rokosuka is currently pursuing a Diploma in Agriculture (Level 5), continuing her journey towards building a career in the agricultural sector.



James Robert Nori Faiamonga
Photo: Meti Kolinisau

Self-Funding His Education Journey

By WATI TALEBULA

When James Robert Nori Faiamonga first set his sights on becoming an engineer, the path ahead was not guaranteed.

A lack of scholarship opportunities in his home country meant his dream would not be funded, but it also would not be abandoned.

He graduated with Bachelor of Engineering (Civil) with Honours (Upper Second Class) from the Fiji National University’s College of Engineering and Technical Vocational and Training (CETVET), marking the culmination of years of persistence, sacrifice, and self-driven commitment.

Originally from Temotu Province in Solomon Islands, with maternal links to Isabel Province, Faiamonga’s academic journey has been defined less by smooth progression and more by resilience in the face of interruption.

“I didn’t get a scholarship and had to work for five years so I can pay for my own fees,” Faiamonga said.

“I started in 2020 and after two years I had to go back and work, then come

back after I was able to collect enough for my fees.”

That cycle of study, work, and return shaped not only his education but also his discipline. Rather than giving up on his ambition, Faiamonga built the means to continue it.

His decision to study at FNU was influenced by the reputation of its engineering graduates, particularly CETVET, which he says is well recognised among companies in his home country.

“I chose FNU because all the companies in my country know the success rate of students after they graduate from CETVET,” he said.

“My dad is an engineer and my brother, is also an engineer, who graduated from CETVET in 2023.”

His father travelled to Fiji just a day before graduation to witness his son’s milestone achievement, a moment Faiamonga describes as deeply meaningful after years of effort and separation.

A Mother's Love Never Fades

By NICOLETTE CHAMBERS

Amelia Vulavou constantly prayed for the day she would witness one of her children proudly walk across the graduation stage and receive their degree.

That prayer was answered this month when her daughter, Maretina Naisulu graduated with a Bachelor of Education in Agriculture during the Fiji National University graduation ceremony this month.

Tears of joy filled her eyes as she proudly watched Maretina carefully put the final touches on her salusalu.

Originally from Votua in Ba, Vulavou has been the sole breadwinner of her family for the past six years after her husband suffered a stroke.

Despite the hardships, she remained determined to provide for her family through fishing, often heading out to sea four days a week

to support her children and their dreams.

“It was a really happy day for me. I was filled with so much joy and excitement to see my daughter graduate,” she shared emotionally.

For Naisulu, the journey was not easy.

Living away from her family while studying at the FNU Nasinu Campus came with many challenges, but she remained focused on fulfilling the promise she made to her parents which was to complete her education successfully.

Supported by the Tertiary Scholarships and Loans Service (TSLs), the middle child of three siblings persevered with determination and resilience.

“I am eternally grateful to my parents for their support and hard work done behind the scenes to ensure that I reach my dream,” she said.



Maretina Naisulu with her proud mother, Amelia Vulavou.
Photo Credit: Nicolette Chambers



Postgraduate Diploma in Education graduate, Jitesh Prasad.
Photo: Nicolette Chambers

Teachers Must be Patient and Passionate: Prasad

By NICOLETTE CHAMBERS

For Jitesh Prasad, teaching in various schools around Fiji for the last 16 years has taught him that educators must be patient and have the passion to teach.

He proudly graduated with a Postgraduate Diploma in Education.

The 43-year-old from Macuata is a devoted husband and father of four who currently serves as the Education Advisor - Nausori with the Ministry of Education. His academic journey began in 2018 when he enrolled in a Diploma in Counselling programme, graduating in 2023.

Determined to continue growing professionally and academically, he is now pursuing his Master of Education.

Prasad has taught in various schools around the country, mainly in rural communities where he made a meaningful difference in the lives of many students.

“Teaching comes with values, and to join this noble profession it is important that as teachers we mentor students well and have the patience to teach,” he said.

He was inspired to become a teacher through his educators, as well as his parents encouraging him to become the first educator in the family.

Tamani Makes Family Proud

By NICOLETTE CHAMBERS

Arnold Tamani was surrounded by smiles and excitement from his wife and children who jointly celebrated a milestone achievement with him.

Tamani proudly graduated with a Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood Care) during the Fiji National University College of Humanities, Education and Law graduation ceremony at the FMF Gymnasium in Suva this month.

Originally from the Hidden Paradise of Savusavu, Tamani was previously employed with the Ministry of Education where he spent 12 years before leading the old Child Care

Centre at FNU.

“I feel so excited to now finally complete so many years of studying,” he said.

“I don’t think I would have reached the end of this journey without the support of my family and those who encouraged and believed in me along the way.”

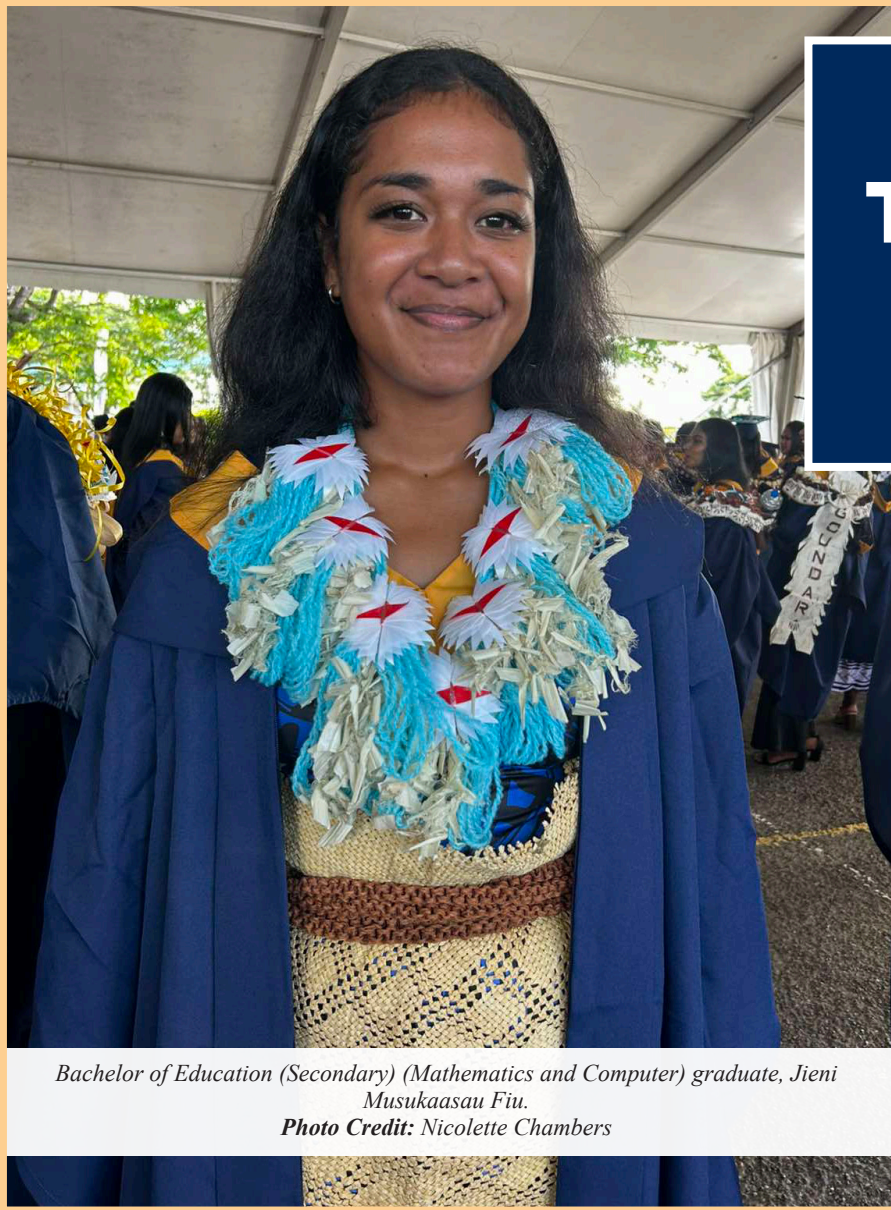
Interestingly with his passion and vast experience in the field, Tamani now operates his own daycare centre in Martintar, Nadi – Legacy Kids Daycare.

He dedicates his achievement to his family and his peers.

Tamani was joined by his wife, Miriama and his daughters, Ozannah and Stephanie.



Arnold Tamani with his family at the graduation ceremony.
Photo Credit: Nicolette Chambers



From Student to Teacher: Jieni Returns to Rotuma to Inspire Students

By NICOLETTE CHAMBERS

Jieni Musukaasau Fiu has returned to her former secondary school to teach Computer Studies.

Fiu returns to Rotuma High School now as a graduate of a Bachelor of Education (Secondary) (Mathematics and Computer) from the Fiji National University.

She was also previously on practicum at the school.

Not only is this a great achievement for her, but for her family as she is the first in her

family to graduate with a degree from a tertiary institution.

The 22-year-old hails from Tubou in Lakeba, Lau and shares maternal links to Motusa in Malha'a Rotuma.

She was among a group of students who left the comfort of their homes in Rotuma to pursue their studies at the FNU's Natabua Campus in Lautoka.

"It is indeed a blessing for me to share this milestone with my family," she said.

"I am also excited to return to Rotuma now as a qualified educator"

Bachelor of Education (Secondary) (Mathematics and Computer) graduate, Jieni Musukaasau Fiu.
Photo Credit: Nicolette Chambers



Zens Medical CEO Highlights Time Management as Key to Achieving Success

By NICOLETTE CHAMBERS

Zens Medical Centres Pte Ltd Chief Executive Officer, Ravitesh Singh, encourages aspiring students pursuing higher education to prioritise effective time management as a key factor in achieving academic and career success.

Singh made this comment following his graduation from the Fiji National University's College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences graduation ceremony this month.

He graduated with a Master of Health Services Management.

Singh shared that managing professional responsibilities while pursuing further studies was never easy, but the determination to achieve his goals kept him motivated throughout the journey.

"I think it has been a challenging one, balancing work with studies and family, it has been difficult but I guess it is the perseverance and the sacrifices we make for ourselves and you know, we all

have goals and aspirations in life, that was the motivating factor for me to ensure that I balance my time, tasks, family time, social time and here I am graduating today," he shared.

He said making decisions and leading the charge of an organisation that has over 150 employees was challenging but rewarding.

"Something I would highly recommend for higher education is your time management has to be there otherwise you will never come through," he added.

"For those working in the medical field, you can do it, it is just how you manage your time, your obligations at work, and if you want to achieve you have got to make that commitment, nothing comes without hard work and commitment."

Singh is also an Executive Masters in Business Administration graduate from the FNU's College of Business, Hospitality and Tourism Studies.



Master of Health Services Management graduate and Zens Medical Centres Pte Ltd Chief Executive Officer, Ravitesh Singh.
Photo Credit: Nicolette Chambers

Advocacy for Safer, Healthier and More Productive Workplaces



Pro Vice Chancellor TVET, Dr Isimeli Tagicakiverata delivering his address at the 2026 OHS Conference
Photo Credit: Nicolette Chambers

By CHRISTAL KAPOOR

Creating productive workplaces begins with creating healthier workplaces, according to the Fiji National University's (FNU) Pro-Vice-Chancellor TVET, Dr Isimeli Tagicakiverata.

Speaking at the 2026 Occupational Health and Safety Conference hosted by FNU's National Training and Productivity Centre (NTPC) last month, Dr Tagicakiverata stressed that psychosocial wellbeing is no longer simply a human resources issue, but a national productivity priority.

"People thrive when they feel safe, respected, supported, and valued," he said. "Psychosocial wellbeing is not just a compliance requirement, it is a productivity imperative."

Held under the theme "Good psychosocial working environments: A pathway to thriving workers and strong organisations," the conference brought together leaders from government, industry, and academia to discuss the growing impact of workplace stress, burnout, bullying, and mental health

challenges.

Dr Tagicakiverata said the role of FNU's NTPC extends far beyond training delivery, positioning the Centre as a key national driver of workforce capability, organisational development, and productivity improvement.

Through industry engagement, professional training programmes, research, and strategic partnerships, NTPC continues to support workplaces in building healthier organisational cultures and more resilient workforces.

"The challenges we face in occupational health and safety cannot be addressed in isolation," he said. "Strong partnerships between academia, industry, regulators, and professional bodies are essential in developing practical solutions that make a real difference."

Dr Tagicakiverata also warned that the effects of poor psychosocial wellbeing often extend beyond the workplace.

"When mental health is neglected, it does not remain contained. It affects families, communities, and entire societies," he said.

Conference Highlights Hidden Cost of Workplace Stress

By CHRISTAL KAPOOR

Workplace stress, bullying, job insecurity and burnout are becoming major threats to productivity and worker wellbeing in Fiji, according to speakers at the 2026 Occupational Health and Safety Conference hosted by the Fiji National University.

Presenting at the conference, Chief Executive Officer of the Fiji Commerce and Employers Federation, Edward Bernard, revealed alarming figures highlighting the growing impact of psychosocial issues in workplaces both globally and locally.

Bernard identified five major workplace psychosocial risk factors affecting workers: job strain, effort-reward imbalance, job insecurity, long working hours, and workplace bullying.

"Psychosocial wellbeing is directly linked to how work is designed, organised and



Director Industry Training Salaseini Ligamamada presents a token of appreciation to Mr Edward Bernard after his presentation.

Photo Credit: Nicolette Chambers

managed," he said. "When these environments become unhealthy, the consequences affect not only workers, but businesses, families and the wider economy."

According to data shared during the presentation, Fiji recorded more than 1,000 occupational health and safety notices over the last three years, with construction, transport, sawmilling, mining and manufacturing among the industries with the highest infringements.

WorkComp payouts linked to workplace-

related issues also exceeded \$16 million within the same period.

Globally, Bernard noted that psychosocial risks contribute to approximately 840,000 deaths annually through cardiovascular diseases, mental disorders and suicide, while also accounting for a loss of 1.37 per cent of global GDP due to reduced productivity and healthcare costs.

He stressed that Fiji still lacks specific legislation and policies addressing psychosocial issues in workplaces.

"There is limited understanding among employers, workers and even policymakers on psychosocial risks in the workplace," Bernard said.

The conference brought together leaders from government, industry and academia to discuss the urgent need for healthier and more psychologically safe workplaces across Fiji and the Pacific.

Naivalulevu Aims Better Health for Rural Communities

By **ROMEKA KUMARI**



Ratu Timoci Tuinakelo Naivalulevu graduating with his Master by Research in Public Health.
Photo Credit: Meti Kolinisau

For Ratu Timoci Tuinakelo Naivalulevu, improving water quality in rural Fiji is more than research, it is a mission to protect lives and strengthen communities.

Naivalulevu became the first-ever graduate from the Fiji National University's (FNU) College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences (CMNHS) to graduate with a Master by Research in Public Health.

The proud son of Natobuniqio Village in Vugalei, Tailevu, said his research was inspired by his passion for community wellbeing and environmental protection.

His research, titled "*Safe Water, Healthy Communities: Assessing Fiji-Specific Drinking Water Standards for Rural Communities*," focused on the connection between water quality, sanitation, waterborne diseases and the environment in rural Fiji.

The study covered six rural communities in the Provinces of Namosi and Tailevu.

Naivalulevu said the research aimed to provide evidence that could improve water monitoring systems and support safer drinking water for rural communities.

"This research looks at how we can strengthen water quality standards for rural communities in

Fiji while protecting public health," he said.

"It focuses on reducing waterborne diseases, improving sanitation and supporting healthier ecosystems."

He said his work was closely linked to his experience with the Watershed Interventions for Systems Health (WISH) Pacific project.

"My work in environmental studies, biodiversity and climate change has helped shape this research and connect it directly to public health," he said.

Naivalulevu said rural communities deserved safe and reliable access to clean water.

"This research is about creating safer and healthier communities," he said.

"We want our communities to thrive, improve their standard of living and continue to grow in a healthy environment."

He also thanked the CMNHS faculty members and his family for their unwavering support throughout his academic journey.

"I am truly grateful to the faculty members at CMNHS and my family for standing by me throughout this journey," he added.

"Their encouragement, guidance and support motivated me to complete this research and continue working towards healthier and safer rural communities in Fiji."

#LandcareFiji2026: Weaving People, Livelihoods, and Landscapes.

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INSIDE FNU is a monthly newspaper which aims to promote the University's activities to the wider community.

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INSIDE FNU welcomes submissions by staff and students for publication in the newsletter. Please send your suggestions, comments or articles for consideration to mprc@fnu.ac.fj

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