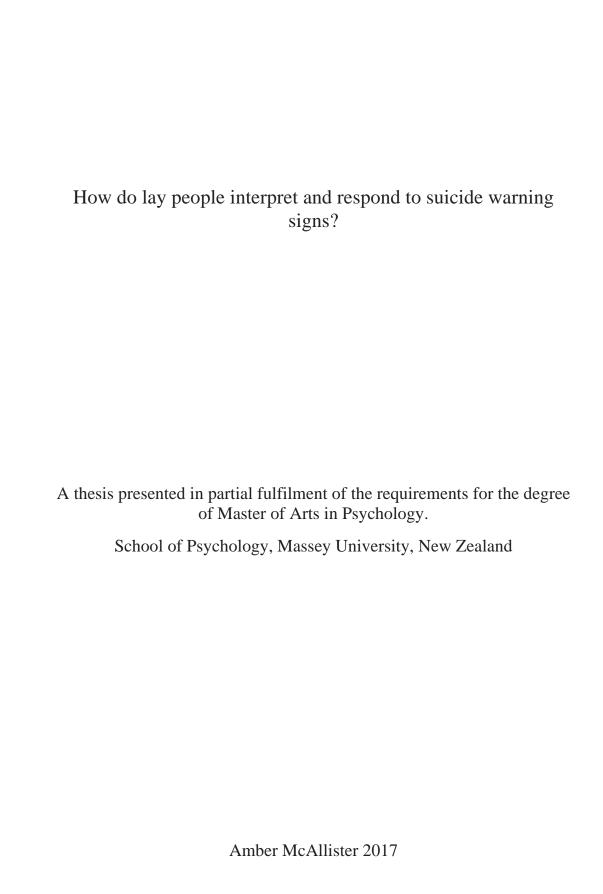
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ABSTRACT

Suicide is a worldwide problem with over 800,000 people dying by suicide every year, and many more attempting suicide or thinking of suicide. Despite prevention efforts, suicide rates are increasing. One promising area of prevention is educating the public to recognise and respond to suicidal signs. Yet knowledge of this area is currently lacking in the literature, especially in New Zealand. The aim of this study was to understand and explore how lay people in New Zealand currently interpret and respond to suicidal signs. A second aim was to assess whether there were gender or age group differences. A mixed methods approach was used that included a validated questionnaire and a semi-structured vignette interview developed specifically for the study. Participants were 24 adults from one location in New Zealand, grouped equally by gender and age (20-30 years or 40-50 years). The results reveal a number of psychological, cognitive, and communicative barriers to interpretation and intervention, and a lack of intervention knowledge. Small gender and age group differences are also revealed. These findings have implications and recommendations for suicide prevention strategies in New Zealand.

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