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# EMPOWERING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS TO BETTER MANAGE SUICIDE RISK THROUGH CO- CREATING A DIGITAL SUICIDE PREVENTION INTERVENTION

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Orygen acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands we are on and pays respect to their Elders past and present. Orygen recognises and respects their cultural heritage, beliefs and relationships to Country, which continue to be important to the First Nations people living today.



Artwork by Emrhan Tjapanangka Sultan, Luritja clan of the Western Desert  
From the painting 'Honey ants and the rivers of hope to sharing knowledge', 2018

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# PROJECT BACKGROUND

A bit of context for the work

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# INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SUICIDALITY SYSTEMATIC REVIEW: RATES

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## Rates for past 12-months:

Suicidal ideation - 5-10% =< domestic students

Self-harm - 4-17% =< domestic students

Suicide attempts - 1-2% => domestic students

Suicide deaths - No studies

Access the paper



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# INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SUICIDALITY SYSTEMATIC REVIEW: RISK & PROTECTIVE FACTORS

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Loneliness,  
social isolation,  
cultural loss,  
social support



Mental health  
issues,  
hopelessness,  
coping skills



Discrimination,  
public stigma,  
abuse



> SH in females  
> Attempts and  
deaths by males



General life  
stress



Academic  
stress, unmet  
performance  
expectations

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# INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SUICIDALITY SYSTEMATIC REVIEW: RISK & PROTECTIVE FACTORS

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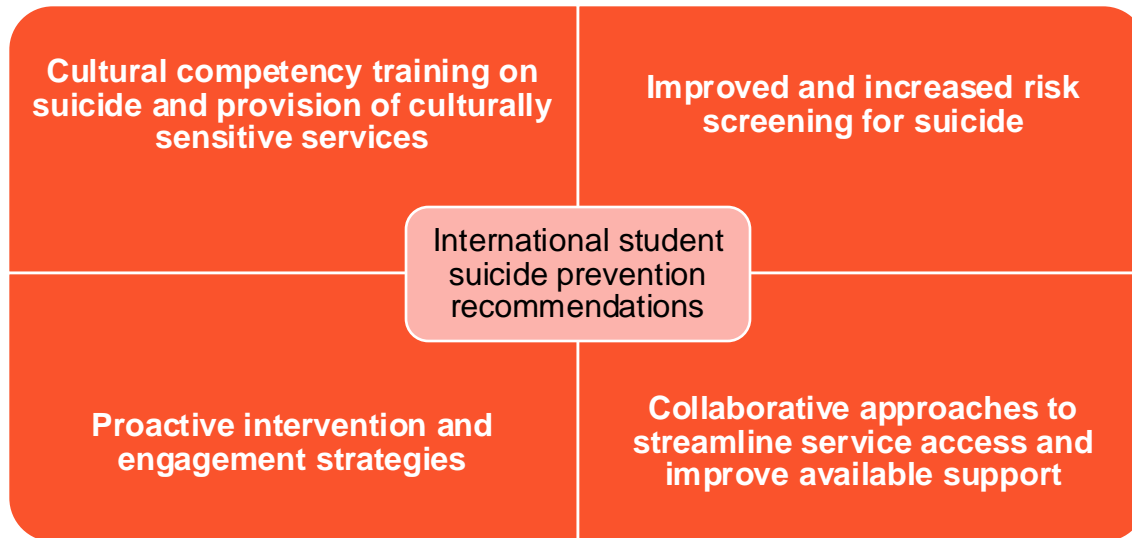
**There can be significant overlap across these factors**

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# SUICIDE PREVENTION FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS: A SCOPING REVIEW

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Found no evidence-based suicide prevention programs specifically designed for international students



Access the paper



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# CO-DESIGN IN SUICIDE PREVENTION

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## What is it?

- Involves target audience in decision-making ranging from full control to consultation
- Aims for tailored, effective outcomes

## Challenges

- Engaging CALD groups effectively
- Addressing burden, safety, and power dynamics

## Knowledge Gaps

- Limited research on CALD participation and suicide prevention co-design
- Requirements to create empowering and inclusive involvement
- Impact and experiences of involvement for participants

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# PROJECT BACKGROUND: CONCEPT

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## **Development of a new app**

- Co-created with and by international students
- Based on modifiable risk and protective factors for suicide and shared experiences of international students
- Designed to meet diverse student needs and centered on cultural responsiveness
- Designed and developed with a focus on implementation, scalability, and a sustainable long-term model

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# STUDY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

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1. Is co-design a feasible method to develop a new suicide prevention intervention and implementation model for international students from the perspective of international students?
2. Do international students find it acceptable to participate in a co-design process to develop a digital suicide prevention intervention and implementation model?
3. What are the challenges and benefits of participation in a suicide prevention co-design workshop for international students?

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# METHODS

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# PARTICIPANTS

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- EOI process with 850+ submissions
- Stratified sampling to select representative sample
  - Invited 20 participants initially
  - Ongoing participation encouraged
  - Added more participants when there were gaps
- **Total = 27 participants**
  - Reporting on complete data for 26 participants



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# PARTICIPANTS

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Participants were from:

- 17 countries across Asia, Africa, the Middle East, South America, and Europe
- 4 metropolitan universities in Melbourne, with majority from UoM
- A wide range of disciplines, including business and commerce, marketing, computer science and IT, engineering, economics and finance, health and medicine, and psychology
- A variety of religions, including Buddhism, Catholicism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, with a portion endorsing no religion

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# PARTICIPANTS

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- Most participants had been in Australia 1-5 years, with a small portion less than a year or more than 5 years
- Even split with primary language between English and other languages
- Majority female (66%)
- Average Age = 26.38, SD = 6.09
- 50% had experienced thoughts of self-harm, 27% had self-harmed, 58% had experienced suicidal ideation, 15% had attempted suicide and 27% had known someone who had died by suicide in their lifetime

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# FRAMEWORKS GUIDING WORKSHOP PLANNING

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## **Several core frameworks guided the workshops:**

- Bowen's 5 stages of co-design 1) understanding experiences, 2) exploring ideas, 3) selecting concepts, 4) converging on practical proposals, and 5) prototyping and evaluating
- Guidelines for involving young people with lived and living experiences of suicide in suicide research (Webb 2023)
- Best practice guidance for co-design with culturally diverse groups (Chauhan, 2021)
- Protective Factor Framework, Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR), existing literature on risk and protective factors

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# SAFETY & INCLUSIVENESS

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- Peer researcher
- Lived experience advisory group
- All participants completed wellness plans
- On call psychologist
- Fidget toys, low level music, snacks
- Live AI transcription, input through both speaking and digital tools (e.g. Mentimeter), connecting and defining boundaries at start and cool down activities at end, handouts to ensure shared understanding (e.g., definitions of key terms)

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# WORKSHOP CONTENTS

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	Workshops	Content	Outcomes
Discovery	1	Journey mapping, Empathy mapping, Digital day in the life	Detailed information on student experiences, potential intervention targets and methods
	2	Existing strengths identification task, Resource and support card sort, What's shared and what's unique	Detailed information on student strengths and resources that could be leveraged, potential areas for cross cutting intervention components and cultural modifications
	3 & 4	10 x 10 idea generation exercise, Overview of what we know, Lightning Decision Jam	Identification of preferred problems & solutions
	5	5 Whys, User persona development, What's been done before, Best approach	Root causes of problems and best approach for prototype development, foundational considerations for implementation
Conceptualisation	6	What's been done before, Low fidelity prototyping	Low fidelity prototypes based on decided approach
	7	Prototyping review and refinement, user flow mapping, toolkit refinement	Feedback on designs, development of different flows through the app
	8	Names & design review, prototype and content refinement.	Feedback on designs, confirmation of direction, and further refinement of content
	9	Design elements review, prototype and content refinement	Locked in design elements, main content, and user flows

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# RESEARCH STUDY DESIGN

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## **Measurement**

- Pre-post questionnaire with both international students and sector stakeholders
- Observations during workshops
- Interviews
- Safety plans

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# MEASURES

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## **Feasibility**

- Reach, participation, support/reactions

## **Acceptability**

- Appropriateness, attitudes, burden, power differentials, perceived effectiveness, meeting expectations, safety

## **Impact of simultaneous process**

- Experiences, challenges, benefits, impact

## **Benefits and challenges for international students**

- Confidence & skills in co-design, social connection, mental health/suicide literacy, confidence, sense of being valued, empowerment, & any other benefits



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## FINDINGS (PRELIMINARY DATA)

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## WORKSHOP STATS

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- Average attendees per workshop = 8.67
- Total attendees across workshops = 78
- Average workshops attended = 2.89
  - Min = 1, Max = 6
- Workshop hours = 67
- Individual hours in workshops = 234



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# SATISFACTION

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Question	Mean	SD
Overall satisfaction	4.54	0.90
<i>Views of specific elements</i>		
Easy to participate	4.77	0.43
Facilitators	4.85	0.37
Design activities	4.58	0.58
Connecting socially with others	4.58	0.58
Working collaboratively	4.77	0.43
Connecting with professionals	4.46	0.71
Working on intervention	4.42	0.76
Learning about suicide prevention	4.38	0.80
Resources available	4.42	0.64

## Participants were

- Highly satisfied
- This covered all elements of the workshops

# FEASIBILITY & ACCEPTABILITY

Question	Mean	SD
<i>Feasibility</i>		
Easy to participate	4.77	0.43
Felt supported	4.73	0.53
Convenient to participate	4.69	0.47
Fair payment	4.58	0.50
<i>Acceptability</i>		
Felt included	4.77	0.43
Needs were met	4.65	0.56
Participation was useful	4.65	0.49
Connected with others	4.62	0.57
Diverse voices included	4.69	0.47
Opinions represented	4.69	0.47
Fair power distribution	4.81	0.40
Equal sharing opportunities	4.81	0.40
Safe environment	4.81	0.49
Cultural respect	4.88	0.33
Expertise valued	4.62	0.57
Access to resources	4.62	0.64

## Participants were

- Saw workshops as very feasible
- Found workshops highly acceptable

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# WORKSHOP SAFETY

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<b>Question</b>	<b>mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Made me feel upset	1.19	0.40
Made me feel suicidal	1.04	0.20
Made me want to self-harm	1.08	0.27
Felt emotionally/psychologically safe	4.38	1.13
Felt culturally safe	4.46	0.90

## Overall participants

- Did not find the workshops upsetting or triggering for suicide or self-harm
- Felt psychologically and culturally safe

# PERCEIVED BENEFITS FOR STUDENTS

Question	mean	SD
Know more about research	4.42	0.58
Know more about suicide prevention	4.15	0.78
Know more about mental health	4.31	0.84
More aware of available services	4.23	0.82
Can contribute to prevention initiatives	4.54	0.65
Empowered to improve own mental health	4.54	0.58
Empowered to support others	4.50	0.58
Greater sense of belonging	4.27	0.72
More socially connected	4.35	0.63
Experience as student is valued	4.62	0.50
More likely to seek help	4.35	0.80
More likely to talk to friends	4.42	0.76
More likely to recommend help	4.38	0.75

## Overall participants

- Improved knowledge of research and mental health literacy
- Felt empowered to manage mental health
- Felt a greater sense of being valued, connected and belonging

# CHANGES IN CONFIDENCE

<i>Confidence to do the following during co-design workshops:</i>	Preworkshop		Postworkshop		T	P
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Understand workshop goals	4.27	0.83	4.77	0.43	-3.35	.003
Meaningfully contribute	4.31	0.79	4.54	0.65	-1.36	.185
Work collaboratively	4.27	0.78	4.69	0.47	-2.85	.009
Receive and incorporate feedback	4.27	0.78	4.65	0.49	-3.08	.005
Adapt to changes	4.31	0.68	4.65	0.49	-2.81	.010
Participate in co-design activities	4.23	0.86	4.73	0.45	-2.82	.009
Impact designs/project outcomes	3.85	0.92	4.54	0.58	-3.8	.001
Handle power differences	4.19	0.75	4.50	0.65	-2.13	.043
Care for well-being	4.38	0.80	4.50	0.58	-0.83	.416
Seek support	4.35	0.75	4.42	0.64	-0.53	.603
Share lived experiences safely	4.15	0.83	4.50	0.58	-1.89	.071

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## BROADER IMPACT

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“Knowing that I'm not alone in my struggles. Sometimes it really feels very isolating being an international student”

“I think just the thought of everyone having similar experiences and knowing that I am not going through it alone”

“Help me reflect the moment when I felt challenging and the journey how I overcome it”

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# DISCUSSION

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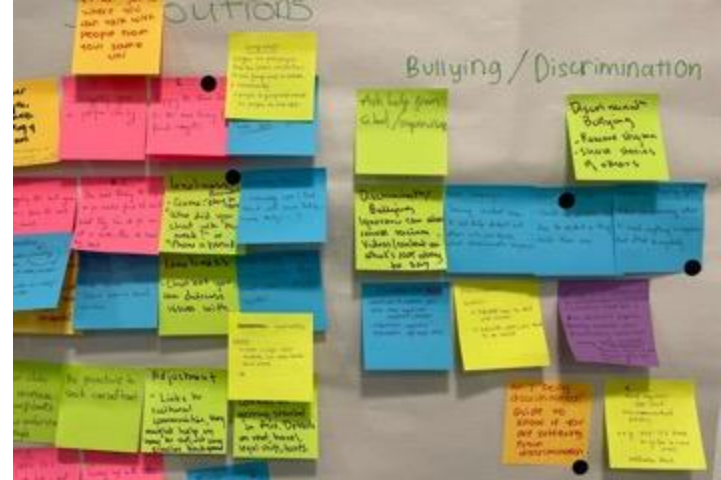


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# CO-DESIGN IS POSITIVE

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- Co-design workshops were feasible, acceptable, and safe
- Students experienced a range of benefits including increased confidence in co-design, knowledge of research and mental health, sense of belonging and being valued
- Qualitative data and observations during workshops suggested a strong sense of shared humanity



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# CO-DESIGN IS CHALLENGING

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- Getting everyone on the same page without overwhelming with content
- Making sure that quiet voices have equal opportunity to participate
- Working with conflicting perspectives and suggestions
- Aligning broad suggestions with what we know works from the literature



# REVOLUTION IN MIND

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Want to get in touch?

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THANK YOU

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**STUDY MELBOURNE**  
Australia

