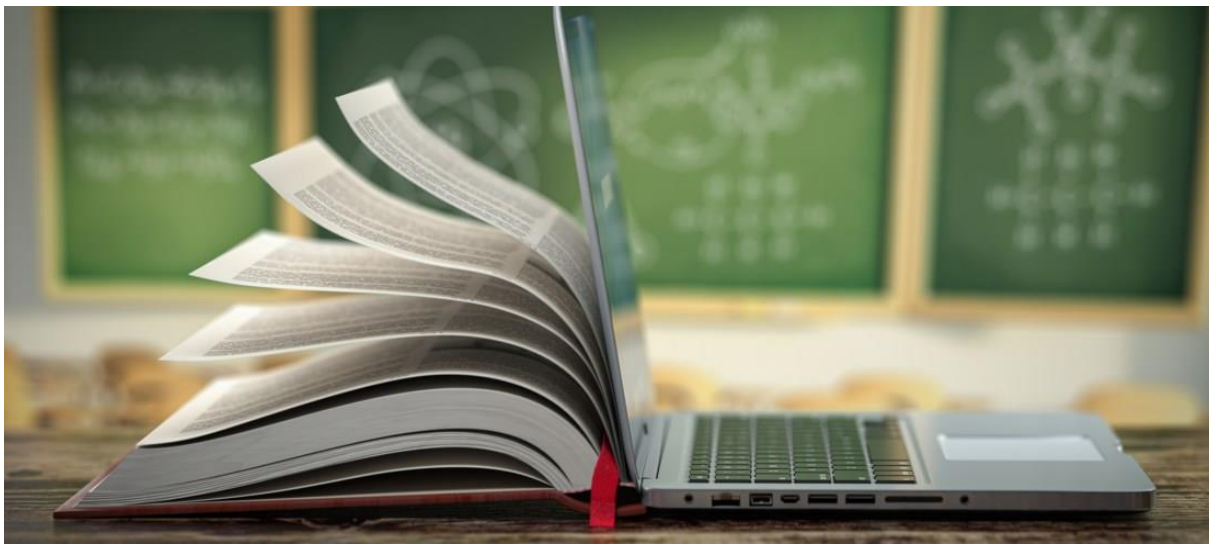
The SEJ

You can use our process anytime, anywhere...

You can use the SEJ Process anytime, anywhere with any situation to bring forth your empowerment, to take charge of your life no matter what the current situation, enabling you to reach your full potential in every moment.



SEJ For Education – Kingston University Data

The SELF Empowerment Journey

enquiries@thesej.co.uk

https://thesej.co.uk/education-services/

Research on the impact of the SEJ

Aim: To find out the impact of integrating the SEJ process for Foundation Year courses

The SEJ Process was offered to Kingston University Pharmacy and Science, Engineering, and Computing (SEC) Foundation Year students as part of the Skills for Life unit, under Resilience in the Professional and Academic/Scientific skills module.

The SEJ Training was integrated into this module as an innovative, simple and a powerful transferrable life skill to support students in Level 3 and 4 (2019-20 only) during their transition to HEI, maintain their overall mental health wellbeing, and in reaching their full potential whilst at university.

All data presented demonstrating the impact of the SEJ was based on a single theory and practical training event.

SEJ delivery

The SEJ training consisted of two stages: stage 1 training consisting of a pre-recorded video and associated exercises. Stage 2 was online interactive SEJ Practice Workshop (*Please see the SEJ Practice Workshop-SEJ for Education*) delivered by an SEJ expert. The two-hour online workshops were delivered with up to 35 students in each session.

Introduction to the research paper:

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), mental health has become a main cause of the overall disease burden worldwide and is a priority for public health prevention. Mental illness is particularly prevalent in young people aged 16 - 24 years old, with several studies reporting, that university students often face new challenges for the first time, and over the last decade there has been a steady increase in mental illnesses and increased reports of suicides, due to long waiting lists for access to wellbeing services. As of 2018, the UK government have called upon universities to improve their mental health services for students.

Studies have also been carried out to understand how significant the transition into higher education, the change in lifestyle and responsibility affects student's mental health. It has been reported that the transition into university, can induce stress, caused by a variety of factors, including moving away from home, financial strains, social change and increasing workloads .The study conducted by Gallagher and Mehta argues that the stress perceived by students in an undergraduate pharmacy program is comparable to that of a similar sample of US students at the same progression point, in a graduate professional degree. Although female students appear to suffer from higher stress levels in general, the overall degree of stress remains relatively unchanged as students' progress through the program of study.

Background to the research:

Many universities are now working towards providing more mental health and wellbeing services such as counselling, drop-in sessions, and stress management. More universities are collaborating with the NHS to manage the demand of mental health promotion and prevention. Additionally, teaching coping mechanisms/self-supporting tools for stress and anxiety or providing mental health services during these crucial times can significantly decrease these preventable deaths, avoid the consequential emotional effects it would have on the community and improve academic success.

Mindfulness training is an example of such an intervention. Such interventions are increasingly popular among higher education students and reported to be an effective component of a wider student mental health strategy to increase resilience and reduce stress in university students. Additionally, meditation workshops are becoming readily available for students in academic institutions.

Some academic institutions have also started to invest in moving counselling and mental health support online and meditation mobile applications such as 'Togetherall©' and 'Fika©' . A study on the use of the meditation mobile app 'Calm' similarly suggests regular meditation, around 40 minutes a week for 11 weeks, can reduce stress in university students and improve self-compassion. Interestingly, Zollars, Poirier and Pailden reported the use of the meditation app 'HeadspaceTM" to improve participants overall mental health uniformly and independently. However, these mobile strategies are relatively new, therefore more longitudinal research is still required to assess its effectiveness. Nonetheless, research has shown a large population of students, despite being aware of these services, will still hesitate to take advantage of this support due to their fear of stigma.

Studies have demonstrated that Black and Asian students tend to report greater stigma about mental health and help-seeking. A higher rate of negative help-seeking attitudes has been associated with individuals from minority ethnic groups such as Black and Asian communities who report lower rates of professional help-seeking

Most of the support available for students suffering mental health conditions are based on treating the symptoms i.e., it is only offered if students declare that they are suffering from mental health issues. Rather than offering post-stress treatment, it would seem more effective to have preventative and individualised tool that students can use before the symptoms become unmanageable or life threatening. This would also alleviate students who feel unable to address their mental health wellbeing due to the perceived stigma.

The Self Empowerment Journey (the SEJ) Program is a meditative process of self-enquiry which follows a structured framework, supporting both experienced and non-experienced meditators. This framework allows the mind to naturally settle as the student works through the process of questioning their stressful and fearful thoughts. The outcome of which creates an openness within the student enabling them to see life situations from a new and truthful perspective. Responding rather than reacting to the present moment, re-balancing the emotions, and addressing any limiting actions. It fosters an openness and willingness to develop Self awareness, accessing a deeper dimension within beyond

thought, breaking the belief that transition is stressful, so students are better able to respond to change appropriately and cease new opportunities.
Having the SEJ as a life skill gives students the ability to respond positively to perceived difficult situations as they arise, they can therefore adapt quickly and easily to whatever is presented in the moment. What once might have been perceived as a 'difficult situation' is received in a higher state of awareness as the SEJ is practiced. The SEJ process enables a student to 'bounce back' in moments. As the SEJ is a process of taking personal responsibility, giving students in-depth insight, knowledge and skills to question thoughts which trigger fearful and limiting emotions and actions. It enables them to be aware of emotions but not react to them causing them to respond with discernment and awareness.

The SEJ is also as the name suggests, empowering for the student as they are fully equipped to manage not life, but themselves. No matter what life brings their way they understand fully that life is perceived through their own unique filters of which they have the power to change through the SEJ. They can remain in a balanced state of mind, body, and emotion whatever the life experience. They are also completely in charge of their own mental and emotional wellbeing, not only having the awareness of their mental health, but more importantly they know how to empower their mental health.
Various research that conducted after implementing a life skills training program in schools show the effect of these training on different aspects of mental health. The results of this research on the effect of life skills training on mental health are closely matched by other studies in this or similar field. This indicates the confirmation and consistency of the results of the first hypothesis with other research results.

In this study we aimed to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the SEJ process in supporting students with their mental health and wellbeing, during their transition into Higher Education.

Methodology of the research:

Pilot study

A final year project student pilot study was conducted in 2019 with the Foundation Year Pharmacy students (n=72) by conducting a survey and a smaller focus group was interviewed where they had shared their experience in more detail. The aim of this pilot study was to investigate the impact of the SEJ as an intervention tool to support Foundation Year Pharmacy students with regards to their wellbeing, student engagement and attainment.

In this pilot study conducted in 2019, students were asked if they had strategies to cope with stress. Examples of strategies include yoga, exercise, meditation, and counselling. The majority of participants had no coping strategies (65%, n=26).

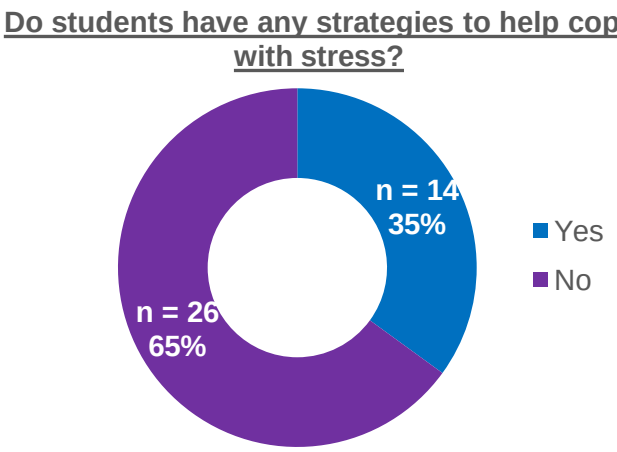


Figure 1 Percentage of students who do not have coping strategies.

The university provides a plethora of mental health and wellbeing services, however, a staggering 90% (n=36) have chosen to never use these facilities (Figure 2). These statistics are reflective of other larger university mental health surveys.

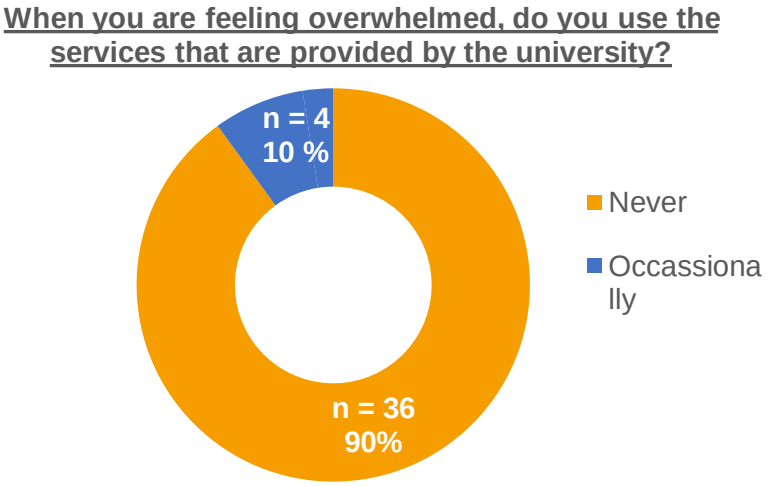


Figure 2 Percentage of responses of students that have accessed mental health services provided by the university.

When asked about whether the SEJ has improved their mental health awareness, 35% (n=14) agree, 25% (n=10) were neutral, 20% (n=8) strongly agree, 15% (n=6) disagree and 5% (n=2) strongly disagree.
These statistics are summarised in Figure 3 below.

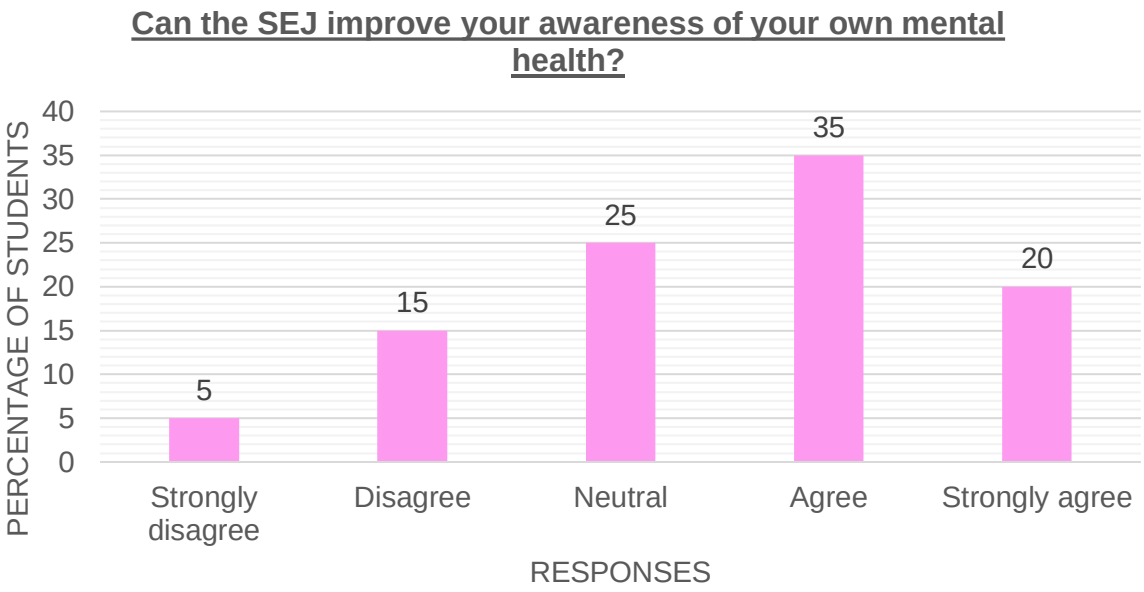
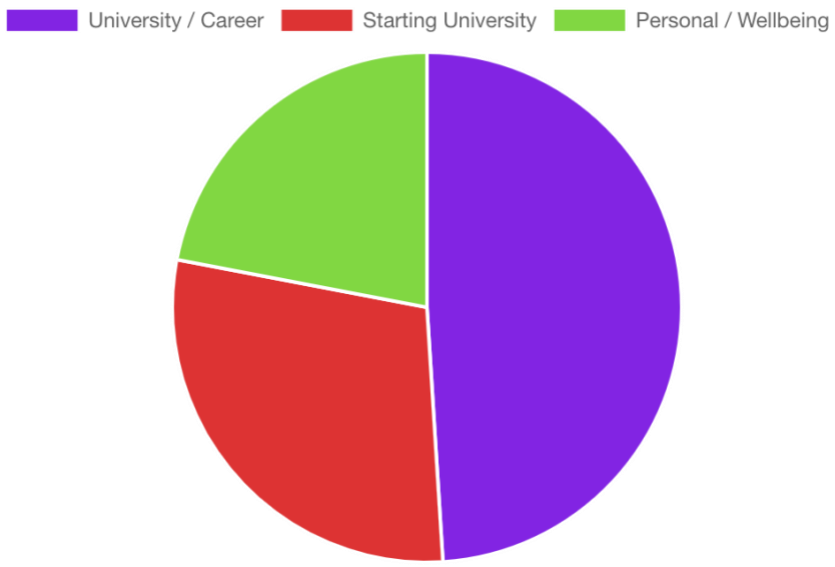


Figure 3 Percentage of student on the effectiveness of the SEJ for improving students' mental health awareness.

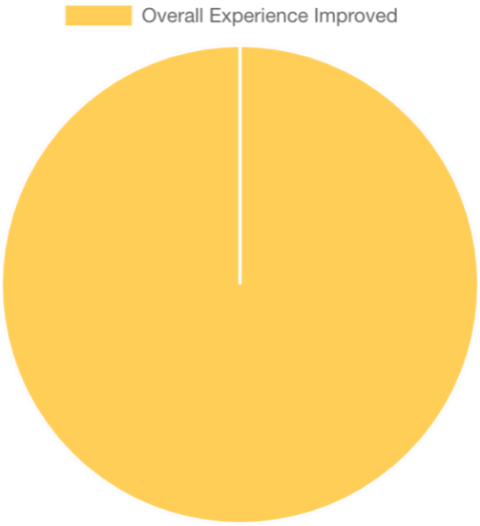
Main Research Study: Results

The research was conducted as a bigger scale (400+ students) project in 2020 to investigate the impact of the SEJ for all Level 3 Foundation Year students in SEC and Pharmacy. The attendance to the SEJ training was mandatory but participation for this research study was optional. Over a two-year period, data was collected to prove the effectiveness of the SEJ Process, enabling students to reach their full potential, show resilience, and become self empowered.

The pie chart below shows the feedback from the most recent cohort indicating the 3 greatest areas of concern for students which the SEJ gave 100% improvement in.



The research data shows a **100% success** rate in improving students' experiences of student life. Addressing successfully stressful thoughts and areas of concern after learning and practicing the SEJ Process, shown as a pie chart below. This is based upon students who fully partook in the survey.



In this study the SEJ has shown to improve students' wellbeing in all the 10 questions being investigated. In figure 4 the blue outer line indicates the area of concerns at the baseline, the orange inner line shows the area of concern post the SEJ training. The smaller the overall area the better the score and indicates improvement in their answer. The question regarding leaving home or living independently elicited lowest score out of the 10 questions asked. This is due to over 50 % of the student population are commuters according to the Kingston University student academic records. In the SEC Foundation year 56.4% of students are described as commuters and 17.2 % are non-commuters.

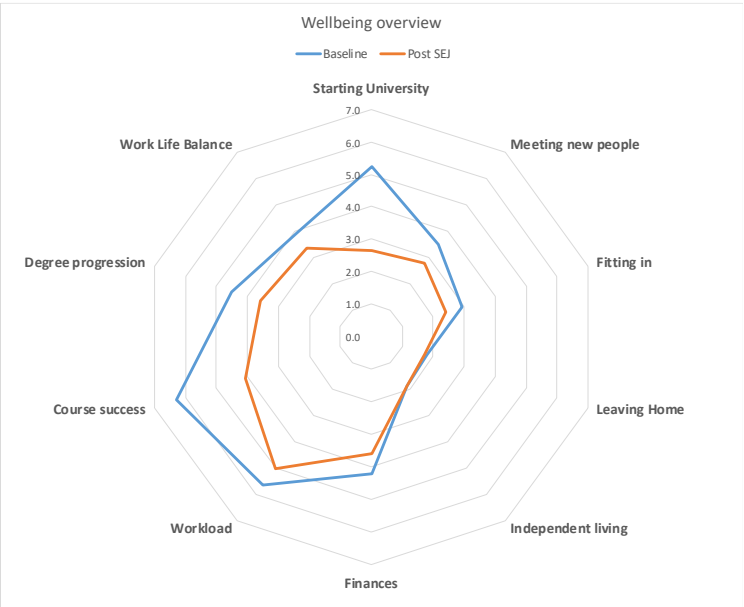


Figure 4 Area profile of wellbeing overview for all 10 questions

In terms of relative improvement, based on a single theory and practical event**,** question 1 "Are you worried about starting university?" had improved by 54% , and question 8 "Are you worried about passing the course?" by 60% as the two most significant improvement in the score. (Figures 4,5 and 6)

Question 1 showed change in score from 5.2 at baseline to 2.6 after the 2-part training (Figure 5). Question 1 asked 'Are you worried about starting university?'

Figure 5 score response at baseline and after SEJ workshop attendance for Q1 on a single theory and practical event.

Question 8 showed change in score from 6.3 (baseline) to 4.1 after the 2 part-training (Figure 6). Question 8 asked 'Are you worried about course success?'

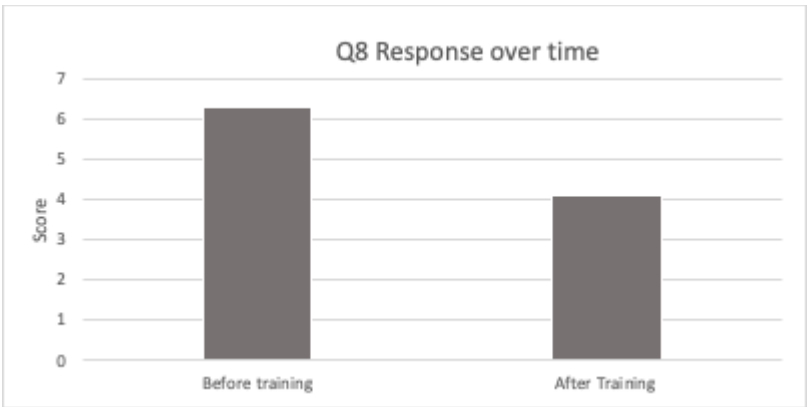


Figure 6 score response at baseline and after SEJ workshop for Q8 on a single theory and practical event.

Workload, course success and progression were of the most concern amongst the Level 3 SEC students. This supports the research previously published by O'Driscoll and Gallagher. [3, 7] In this study our data suggests that the SEJ has made positive impact in the students fears regarding university career (n= 9, 64 %), starting university (n= 12, 86%), and personal wellbeing (n= 7, 50%).

Overall, an improved score was observed from the students, after attending one practical workshop. (*Please see the SEJ Practice Workshop-SEJ for Education*), which suggests the importance and significance of completing the full training, in particular the practical aspect, in achieving the effectiveness of the whole of the SEJ training. These results indicate the significant impact of the SEJ for these students at their most vulnerable and anxious periods at the start of their university journey from just a single 90- minutes training and 2-hour practice session.

Conclusion:

In this study, the need for cost-effective and preventative mental health provisions to address the increased mental health crisis university students are facing, has been highlighted in many previous studies. The SEJ is the only program that has been found to be an effective, easily accessible, and adaptable skill-based program for Foundation Year students in their preliminary year of study. This study found that the SEJ was highly effective particularly in addressing students' stressful thoughts and fears regarding starting university and progression to further study. What is of interest to students is that this process does not detract from their studies, but rather enhances them and all aspects of student life as the process is done in real-time.

The SEJ has shown to be a core transferable skill to learn in empowering students during their transition. Students can apply the SEJ, a psychoeducational solution focused process, in the moment, adaptable in all situations, unique to the individual, without external intervention. This helps to remove the stigma, or a reliance on overburdened services with delayed waiting times. The SEJ helps the practitioner move from a state of stress, fear, and worry to a place of empowerment. This easy-to-use process not only proactively prevents mental health issues from developing, or increasing in severity, but moreover is proven to completely restore positive mental health, thereby enabling the individual to reach their full potential.

As shown in Fig.1 the majority of students (65%) expressed their concerns they had no 'useful coping mechanisms' at the average age of 18. It shows that although primary, secondary schools, and parents/carers may be teaching about mental health, they are failing in the majority of students to provide them with the appropriate life skills to empower them effectively. It is for this reason we can see the value of teaching the SEJ as a transferrable life skill starting at secondary schools through to university, with a holistic approach to include all staff, students, and parents/carers at the setting.

Research Article

1. References and citations are available in the full Research Article available on request.
2. Journals under review: Psychology Journal and Educational Pedagogic