

## Emotional Intelligence as a Predictor of Postgraduate Students' Psychosocial Employability Attributes

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**This study determined the influence of individuals' emotional intelligence on their psychosocial employability attributes. A cross-sectional quantitative survey was conducted. A non-probability sample of 304 employed postgraduate students (predominantly early career black = 70 %; females = 64 % with a mean age of 26 – 40 years) participated in the study. Multiple regressions were used to analyse the data. Emotional intelligence was found to be a significant predictor of the participants' psychosocial employability attributes. The findings provide valuable information that can be used in career development support and counselling practices in the contemporary work world.**

*Keywords: career metacompetencies, emotional intelligence, employability attributes, career development support practices*

Graduates entering the world of work today are presented with a number of challenges. These include a decrease in employment opportunities and job security, fast-changing technology and an increasing personal responsibility for keeping up with changes in their disciplinary field of knowledge as well as continual upskilling and lifelong learning (Faber, Lopez, & Prescher, 2012; Marock, 2008; Pool & Sewell, 2007). The 21st century demands from adults entering the world of work to be work ready, employable and to sustain their employability (Coetzee, 2012; Marock, 2008; Pool & Sewell, 2007). In the South African context, the increased concerns about the employability of young adults resulted in more emphasis being placed on their employability and helping them to increase and sustain their employability (Marock, 2008). Several authors found that sustained employability contributes to an individual's perceptions of career success and satisfaction in the contemporary business environment (Coetzee & Beukes, 2010; Coetzee & Schreuder, 2011; Fugate, Kinicki, & Ashforth, 2004). Employability is regarded as advantageous for present performance on the job, career outcomes and business outcomes (Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006).

### Employability Attributes

Employability presupposes proactive career behaviours and capacities that help people to fulfil, acquire or create work through the optimal use of both occupation-related and career metacapacities (Coetzee & Schreuder, 2011; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011). In the context of the present study, people's employability refers to a sense of self-directedness or personal agency in retaining or securing a job or form of employment (Coetzee & Schreuder, 2011). Personal agency in sustaining one's employability requires from individuals to rely more heavily on their own capabilities and personal resources (career metacapacities) in regulating their behaviour and influencing their environment to succeed in more uncertain work settings (Converse, Pathak, DePaul-Haddock, Gotlib, & Merbedone, 2012; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). In this regard, the employability of an individual depends upon certain psychosocial attributes that are seen to be important for successfully managing the in-

terface between one's personal career needs and desires and the demands of a continually changing work environment (Beukes, 2010; Bezuidenhout, 2011; Fugate et al., 2004). Psychosocial employability attributes act as transactional resources between the inner (psychological) and outer (social) worlds of a person and assist in the process of adapting to social expectations and workroles, and dealing with career transitions between occupational positions in a more turbulent occupational world (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

### Emotional Intelligence in the Career Context

Emotional intelligence represents a set of dispositional attributes (such as self-awareness, emotional management, self-motivation, empathy and relationship management) for monitoring their own feelings, beliefs and internal states and those of others to provide useful information to guide their own thinking and actions and those of others (Day, 2000; Goleman, 1995; Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Wong & Law, 2002). Salovey and Mayer (1990, p. 85) describe emotional intelligence as the extent to which individuals are able to tap into their feelings and emotions as a source of energy to guide their thinking and actions. According to Salovey and Mayer (1990), emotional intelligence consists of four interrelated abilities which include perceiving emotions, using emotions to facilitate thoughts, understanding emotions and managing emotions to enhance personal growth. Mayer and Salovey (1997) also characterise emotions as ordered responses which cross the edge of many psychological subsystems (including the physiological, cognitive, motivational and experiential systems).

According to Nelis, Quoidbach, Mikolajczak and Hansenne (2009), emotional intelligence explains individual differences in the perception, processing, regulation and utilisation of emotional information. These differences were found to have a significant influence on an individual's mental and physical health, work performance and social relationships. Mayer, Dipaolo and Salovey (1990) view emotional intelligence as the accurate appraisal and expression of emotions in oneself and others as well as the regulation of emotions in a way that enhances living.

Menhart (1999) found significant relations between emotional intelligence and career behaviours. Coetzee and Beukes (2010) found that higher levels of emotional intelligence (especially managing one's own emotions) lead to greater confidence in displaying employability related skills and behaviours, and that higher levels of emotional intelligence and employability lead to higher levels of career satisfaction

Emotional intelligence and psychosocial employability attributes such as career self-management, career resilience and adaptability, proactivity, openness, optimism, self-efficacy and sociability are increasingly receiving attention in the research literature as a result of the increased emphasis placed on individuals' agency in sustaining their employability (Beukes, 2010; Bezuidenhout, 2011; Buchner, 2007; Emmerling & Cherniss, 2003; Fugate et al., 2004; Potgieter, 2012; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011). According to Buchner (2007), individuals differ with regard to their capacity to engage in proactive career behaviours. Emotional intelligence has been recognised as a career metacapacity which influences people's employability and career success (Coetzee & Beukes, 2010; Coetzee & Schreuder, 2011; Emmerling & Cherniss, 2003; Poon, 2003). Individuals' emotional intelligence has been related to their job and contextual performance and characteristic behavioural patterns which distinguish them from others (Moyo & Theron, 2011). Brown, George-Curran, and Smith (2003) found that when people possess a high level of emotional intelligence, they are more likely to achieve career success and perform well in career-related tasks (which could include higher employability skills). Goleman (1995) and Kanfer and Kantrowitz (2002) report that emotional intelligence affects an individual's career achievement, and physical and mental health. Pool and Sewell (2007) and Yorke and Knight (2007) also recognise emotional intelligence as an important attribute of an individual's employability. On the other hand, employability attributes have been found to be significantly related to individuals' self-esteem, job search behaviour and re-employment (Fugate et al., 2004).

Although several South African studies confirmed that emotional intelligence has an impact on job performance and leadership success (Hayward, Amos, & Baxter, 2008; Murphy & Janeke, 2009; Nel & De Villiers, 2004) and relates to individuals' employability (Beukes, 2010; Coetzee & Schreuder, 2011), there seems to be a paucity of research in the South African context on how individuals' emotional intelligence relates to their psychosocial employability attributes. The purpose of the present study is to add to the contemporary research literature on careers by investigating how people's emotional intelligence relates to their psychosocial employability attributes in the South African multicultural context.

### **Psychosocial Employability Attributes**

Individuals' psychosocial employability attributes are regarded as the personal resources they tap into for coping with current and anticipated career developmental tasks, occupational transitions and work circumstances and events that alter their social integration in the contemporary work world (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). People's psychosocial employability attributes act as self-regulatory career metacapacities that facilitate proactive career behaviours, personal career agency and adaptability (Beukes, 2010; Bezuidenhout, 2011; Fugate et al., 2004).

Bezuidenhout's (2011) framework of employability attributes is of relevance to the present study. The employability attributes framework (shown in figure 1) describes a set of seven core

psychosocial employability attributes that are regarded as important for increasing the likelihood of securing and sustaining employment opportunities (Bezuidenhout, 2011). As shown in figure 1, individuals' career self-management, career resilience and cultural competence are underpinned and strengthened by a set of career-related dispositional self-evaluations that combine cognitively and affectively in individuals with high employability to help them identify and realise employment opportunities (Bezuidenhout, 2011; Fugate et al., 2004). The core dispositional self-evaluations include individuals' self-efficacy, proactivity, sociability and entrepreneurial orientation and relate to their propensity to learn, explore and connect with others (Bezuidenhout, 2010).

Career self-management facilitates career planful behaviour, goal-setting, exploration and decision-making. Career self-management acts as the motivational drive for engaging in activities to update individuals' marketable skills, setting personal goals, and building strong professional networks in obtaining these goals and aspirations (Bezuidenhout, 2011; Bridgestock, 2009; Reitman & Schner, 2008). Proactive career self-management behaviour increases individuals' employability, adaptability and career resilience which may in turn increase their self-efficacy in realising psychological career success. Individuals need to proactively gather information about jobs, careers, employers and take initiatives to improve their situation and shape their careers to obtain career success in the contemporary work world (Bezuidenhout, 2010; Fugate & Kinicki, 2008; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

Career resilience enables individuals to feel more in control of their career and engender a sense of optimism that they will be successful in their careers (Fugate & Kinicki, 2008). An entrepreneurial orientation facilitates career resilience by enabling individuals to take advantage of changes in the employment environment, and to seek out and capitalise on opportunities (Bezuidenhout, 2011; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011). Resilient individuals tend to have positive self-evaluations, are optimistic about future events, and feel confident about their employability and capacity to handle challenges (Fugate & Kinicki, 2008). Being open to new opportunities in the marketplace and new ways of doing things to adapt to a new work environment, helps individuals to be in a better position to gain the necessary competencies to become more marketable to employers (Bezuidenhout, 2011).

Careers are constructed in a social context (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) and individuals need to be competent in interacting with people from diverse backgrounds in searching for, creating and sustaining employment in multicultural workplaces (Bezuidenhout, 2011). Sociability refers to networking behaviours and being open to building social and business contacts (Bezuidenhout, 2011). Successful networking influences career outcomes such as increased job opportunities, promotions, supportive behaviours and career satisfaction (Forret & Sullivan, 2004). Wahat (2009) found sociability to be significantly related to proactive career behaviour and career adaptability or resilience.

### **Goals of the Study**

The present study aimed to assess whether individuals' emotional intelligence significantly predicts their psychosocial employability attributes. The following research question was posed: Does individuals' emotional intelligence significantly predict their psychosocial employability attributes?

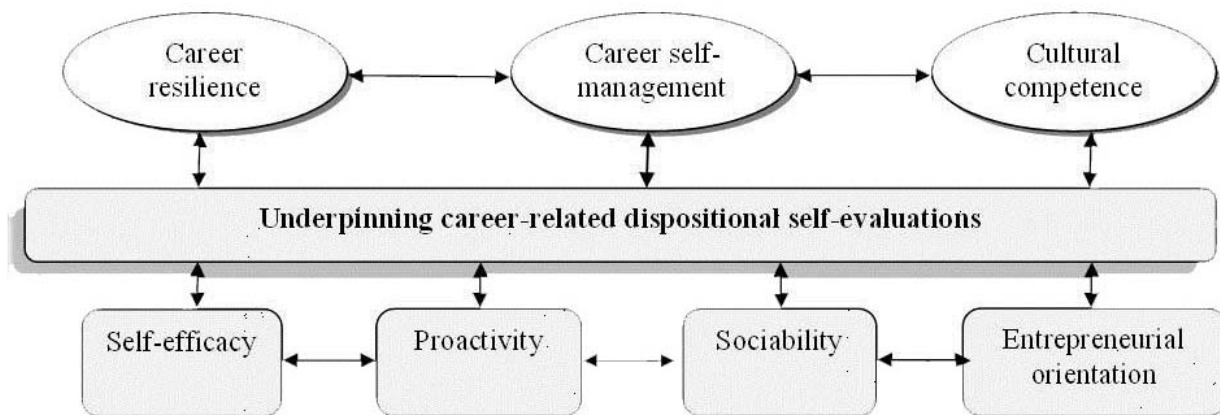


Figure 1. Overview of core psychosocial employability attributes

Assessing whether people's emotional intelligence is related to employability attributes may provide valuable information that managers and human resource professionals and career counsellors may potentially use in career development support practices to help individuals and especially young early career adults to enhance their employability.

## Method

### Participants and Setting

The participants were a non-probability sample of 304 employed adults enrolled for an honours degree in Business Management at an open distance learning higher education institution. The participants attended a three-day study school. The sample was represented by predominantly blacks (70%) and females (64%) in the early adulthood life stage (26–40 years) (84%). Most participants were appointed on middle management level (25%), first level supervision (21%) or as part of the general staff (28%).

### Measuring Instruments

Participants completed the following scales: Assessing Emotions Scale (AES) and the Employability attributes scale (EAS). They also provided demographic data on their race, gender, age and job level.

**Assessing Emotions Scale.** The Assessing Emotions Scale (AES) (Schutte, Malouff & Bhullar, 2007) was used to measure the participants' emotional intelligence. The purpose of the AES is to assess characteristics, traits or emotional intelligence. The AES is a self-report instrument and consists of 33 items. In addition, the AES has four subscales, including perception of emotions (10 items), managing own emotions (9 items), managing others' emotions (8 items) and utilisation of emotions (6 items). Respondents are required to rate each item on a five-point Likert-type scale. The higher the number, the more true that item is to the respondent. Several studies confirmed the validity and reliability of scores from the AES (Schutte et al., 2007; Schutte, Malouff, Hall, Haggerty, Cooper & Golden, 1998).

**Employability Attributes Scale (EAS).** The Employability Attributes Scale (EAS) of Bezuidenhout and Coetzee (2010) was used to measure the participants' psychosocial employability attributes. The EAS (Bezuidenhout & Coetzee, 2010) is a

self-rated, multi-factorial measure which contains 49 items and seven subscales: career self-management (11 items), cultural competence (5 items), self-efficacy (6 items), career resilience (6 items), sociability (7 items), entrepreneurial orientation (7 items) and proactivity (7 items). Respondents are required to rate each item on a six-point Likert-type scale. The higher the number, the more true that item is to the respondent. An exploratory factor analysis (Coetzee, 2010) and inter-item correlational analyses provided evidence that the EAS items meet the psychometric criteria of construct validity. In terms of reliability (internal-consistency), Cronbach's alpha coefficients for each subscale ranged between .78 and .90 (high) (Coetzee, 2010).

### Research Procedure

Ethical clearance and permission to conduct the study were obtained from the management of the higher education institution that participated in the study. The questionnaires were administered in a group session during the study school and collected as soon as they had been completed. Each questionnaire included a covering letter inviting subjects to participate in the study voluntarily, assuring them that their individual responses would remain confidential and be used for research purposes only. A total of 500 respondents attended the study school and 304 usable questionnaires were returned, yielding a response rate of 61%.

### Data Analysis

Stepwise multiple regression analysis was performed to predict whether emotional intelligence predict psychosocial employability attributes. The value of adjusted  $R^2$  was used to determine the proportion of the total variance of the dependent variables (EAS) that is explained by the independent variables (AES). The F-test was used to test whether there was a significant regression ( $p \leq .05$ ) between the independent and dependent variables. For the purposes of this study, significant  $R^2$  values larger than .13 (medium effect) (Cohen, 1992) were regarded as practically significant.

## Results

### Descriptive and Reliability Statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive information of the four AES subscales. The mean scores of all the AES subscales ranged between 4.16 and 3.77. The sample of participants obtained the highest score on the managing own emotions subscale ( $M = 4.16$ ;  $SD = 4.61$ ) and the lowest score on the perception of emotions subscale ( $M = 3.77$ ;  $SD = 4.29$ ). The standard deviations of the subscales are fairly similar, all ranging from 3.12 to 4.61. Table 1 also shows that acceptable internal consistency reliabilities were obtained for the AES.

Table 1 shows that the mean scores of all the EAS subscales ranged between 4.75 and 4.14. The sample of participants obtained the highest mean score on the career self-management subscale ( $M = 4.75$ ;  $SD = 8.14$ ) and self-efficacy subscale ( $M = 4.75$ ;  $SD = 4.07$ ), and the lowest mean score on the sociability subscale ( $M = 4.14$ ;  $SD = 5.90$ ). Table 1 also shows that acceptable internal consistency reliabilities were obtained for the EAS.

### Predicting Emotional Intelligence from Psychosocial Employability Attributes

Table 2 indicates that the regression models explained small ( $R^2 \leq .12$ ), medium ( $.13 \leq R^2 \leq .25$ ) and large ( $R^2 \geq .26$ ) practical percentages of variance (Cohen, 1992).

### Emotional Intelligence and Career Self-Management

The regression of the emotional intelligence variable upon the career self-management variable produced a statistically significant model ( $F(1308.44; 49.64) = 26.36$ ;  $p \leq .000$ ), accounting for 25% ( $R^2 = .25$ ; medium practical effect) of the variance. Managing own emotions ( $\beta = .35$ ;  $p \leq .000$ ) contributed significantly to explaining the percentage of variance in career self-management. Utilising emotions ( $\beta = .13$ ;  $p \leq .032$ ) also contributed significantly to explaining the percentage of variance in career self-management. The beta-weights indicated

that managing own emotions contributed most towards explaining the variance in career self-management.

### Emotional Intelligence and Cultural Competence

The regression of emotional intelligence upon the cultural competence variable produced a statistically significant model ( $F(161.31; 2.26) = 7.96$ ;  $p \leq .000$ ), accounting for 8% ( $R^2 = .08$ ; small practical effect) of the variance. The following variables contributed significantly towards explaining the variance in cultural competence: managing others' emotions ( $\beta = .21$ ;  $p \leq .012$ ) and utilising emotions ( $\beta = .13$ ;  $p \leq .048$ ). According to the beta-weights, managing others' emotions contributed most significantly towards explaining the variance in cultural competence.

### Emotional Intelligence and Self-Efficacy

The regression of emotional intelligence upon the self-efficacy variable produced a statistically significant model ( $F(326.95; 12.44) = 26.29$ ;  $p \leq .000$ ), accounting for 25% ( $R^2 = .25$ ; medium practical effect) of the variance. The following variables contributed significantly to explaining the percentage of variance in self-efficacy: perception of emotion ( $\beta = .22$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ), managing own emotions ( $\beta = .22$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ) and utilising emotions ( $\beta = .24$ ;  $p \leq .000$ ). The beta-weights indicated that utilising emotions made the largest contribution in explaining the variance in the variable self-efficacy.

### Emotional Intelligence and Career Resilience

The regression of emotional intelligence upon the career resilience variable produced a statistically significant model ( $F(489.53; 12.00) = 4.81$ ;  $p \leq .000$ ), accounting for 35% ( $R^2 = .35$ ; large practical effect) of the variance. Managing own emotions ( $\beta = .43$ ;  $p \leq .000$ ) and managing others' emotions ( $\beta = .18$ ;  $p \leq .11$ ) significantly contributed to explaining the percentage of variance of career resilience. According to the beta-weights, managing own emotions was the variable that contributed the most towards explaining the career resilience construct.

Table 1

*Means and Standard Deviations of the Assessing Emotions Scale and the Employability Attributes Scale*

Assessing Emotions Scale (AES)	Mean	SD	Cronbach's alpha coefficient
Perception of emotions	3.77	4.29	.59
Managing own emotions	4.16	4.61	.77
Managing others' emotions	3.98	4.20	.69
Utilisation of emotions	3.96	3.12	.59
Total scale	1.70	13.36	.87
Employability Attributes Scale (EAS)			
Career self-management	4.75	8.14	.88
Cultural competence	4.30	4.70	.87
Self-efficacy	4.75	4.07	.73
Career resilience	4.60	4.28	.80
Sociability	4.14	5.90	.82
Entrepreneurial orientation	4.63	5.68	.75
Proactivity	4.72	5.08	.82
Total scale	4.57	34.09	.96

Note. N=304



Table 2  
Significant Multiple Regression Results: AES & EAS

Variable	B	SEB	Standardised coefficient	$\beta$	t	P	F	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	R
<b>Career self-management (Constant)</b>	13.89	3.95			3.51	.000***	26.36	.25***++	.51
Managing own emotions	.62	.12		.35	5.08	.000***			
Utilising emotions	.34	.16		.13	2.15	.032*			
<b>Cultural competence (constant)</b>	9.15	2.53			3.62	.000***	7.96	.08***+	.31
Managing others' emotions	.23	.09		.21	2.52	.012*			
Utilising emotions	.20	.10		.13	1.99	.048*			
Self-efficacy (constant)	8.56	1.98			4.33	.000***	26.29	.25***++	.51
Perception of emotion	.21	.07		.22	3.23	.001**			
Managing own emotions	.20	.06		.22	3.21	.001**			
Utilising emotions	.31	.08		.24	3.91	.000***			
<b>Career resilience (constant)</b>	5.24	1.94			2.70	.000***	4.81	.35***+++	.59
Managing own emotions	.39	.06		.43	6.52	.000***			
Managing others' emotions	.18	.07		.18	2.55	.011*			
<b>Sociability (constant)</b>	2.03	2.88			.70	.000***	25.02	.24***++	.50
Managing own emotions	.35	.09		.27	3.90	.00***			
Managing others' emotions	.24	.11		.17	2.27	.024*			
<b>Entrepreneurial orientation (constant)</b>	9.64	2.48			3.89	.000***	23.58	.23***++	.49
Perception of emotion	.23	.08		.19	2.80	.005**			
Managing own emotions	.31	.08		.28	4.00	.000***			
<b>Proactivity (constant)</b>	6.41	2.37			2.71	.00***	35.51	.31***+++	.57
Perception of emotions	.16	.08		.13	1.99	.047*			
Managing own emotions	.06	.09		.40	5.93	.000***			

Note. N=304; \*\*\*p<.001; \*\*p<.01; \*p<.05; +R<sup>2</sup>≤.12 (small practical effect size); ++ R<sup>2</sup>≥.13≤.25 (medium practical effect size); +++R<sup>2</sup>≥.26 (large practical effect size).

### Emotional Intelligence and Sociability

The regression of emotional intelligence upon the sociability variable produced a statistically significant model ( $F(66.31; 26.34) = 25.02; p \leq .000$ ), accounting for 24% ( $R^2 = 24$ ; medium practical effect) of the variance. Managing own emotions ( $\beta = .27; p \leq .000$ ) and managing others' emotions ( $\beta = .17; p \leq .024$ ) contributed significantly towards the explanation of the percentage of variance in sociability. The beta-weights indicated that managing own emotions contributed the most towards explaining the sociability variable.

### Emotional Intelligence and Entrepreneurial Orientation

The regression of the emotional intelligence variable upon the entrepreneurial orientation variable produced a statistically significant model ( $F(46.21; 19.52) = 23.58; p \leq .000$ ), accounting for 23% ( $R^2 = 23$ ; medium practical effect) of the variance. The percentage of variance for entrepreneurial orientation was explained by perception of emotion ( $\beta = .19; p \leq .005$ ) and managing own emotions ( $\beta = .28; p \leq .000$ ) where the beta-weights indicated that managing own emotions contributed the most towards explaining entrepreneurial orientation.

### Emotional Intelligence and Proactivity

The regression of the emotional intelligence variable upon the proactivity variable produced a statistically significant model ( $F(63.35; 17.75) = 35.51; p \leq .000$ ), accounting for 31% ( $R^2 = 31$ ; large practical effect) of the variance. The percentage of variance for proactivity ( $R^2 = 31\%$ , large practical effect) was explained by perception of emotion ( $\beta = .13; p \leq .047$ ) and managing own emotions ( $\beta = .40; p \leq .000$ ) where the beta-weights indicated that managing own emotions contributed the most towards explaining proactivity.

## Discussion

Overall, the results showed that the participants' emotional intelligence significantly predicted their psychosocial employability attributes. More specifically, managing their own emotions appear to be significant in explaining the participants' level of confidence in their career self-management, self-efficacy, career resilience, sociability, entrepreneurial orientation and proactivity. These results suggest that being able to manage their own emotions significantly increases their confidence in demonstrating the psychosocial employability attributes needed to sustain their employability. These findings seem to corroborate those of previous studies pointing out the influencing role of people's emotional intelligence on their career decision-making behaviour (Emmerling & Cherniss, 2003) and employability (Brown et al., 2003; Coetzee & Beukes, 2010; Pool & Sewell, 2007; Yorke & Knight, 2004). In this regard, the results of the present study showed that the ability to perceive their own and others' emotions, and managing their own emotions, significantly increased the participants' proactiveness in taking the actions necessary to sustain their employability. Moreover, perceiving and managing emotions significantly enhanced the participants' entrepreneurial orientation. These findings point to the importance of developing individuals' emotional intelligence to facilitate personal agency and creativity in sustaining their employability. Salovey and Mayer (1990) are also of the view that a better understanding of their emotions and emotional reactions helps individuals to generate multiple future plans, improve their decision-making processes and facilitate creative thinking in the pursuit of challenging tasks and goals.

Utilising their emotions relates to the ability of individuals to use emotions adaptively to solve problems and achieve their goals (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). The results showed that this ability significantly predicted the participants' career self-management and self-efficacy. The participants' self-efficacy seemed to be further enhanced by their ability to perceive their own emotions. Coetzee and Beukes (2010) found that a higher ability in managing and utilising their own emotions increases individuals' confidence in their ability to achieve their career goals and succeed in the business world (business acumen). Puffer (2011) also found that emotional intelligence positively relates to greater career decision-making self-efficacy and a higher level of willingness to commit to attractive career options.

The participants' cultural competence and sociability were also significantly influenced by their ability to manage others' emotions. According to Carmeli (2003), emotionally intelligent people tend to display charismatic behaviours that induce a positive effect in others which often results in the ability to influence others socially in the pursuit of their goals. Lopes, Cote and Salovey (2006) found that emotionally intelligent people tend to be more interpersonally sensitive, more social and more likely to contribute to a positive work environment. In this regard, the results of the present study seem to suggest that managing others' emotions is important to establish the social and business contacts and networks needed in the contemporary multicultural work world. Successful networking influences career outcomes such as increased job opportunities, promotions, career supportive behaviours and career satisfaction (Forret & Sullivan, 2004).

### Implications of the Study

Considering that careers are constructed in a social context and that people's emotional intelligence and psychosocial employability attributes act as transactional resources between the inner (psychological) and outer (social) worlds of a person (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012), managers, human resource professionals and career counsellors should take note of the findings of the present study. The present study showed that individuals' emotional intelligence needs to be developed to facilitate the proactive career development behaviours they need to successfully sustain their employability in the multicultural South African workplace context. Research has shown that emotional intelligence develops over a person's life span and can be enhanced through training (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2005; Locke, 2005), and teaching and learning in formal educational contexts (Jaeger, 2003). Emotional intelligence therefore needs to be included in an individuals' studies and development. Supportive career development practices typically include activities to help individuals become more self-aware about their career interests and motivations, their employability strengths and development areas, how to pursue their career goals and aspirations, and how their emotional intelligence hinder or enhance their career success and employability (Beukes, 2010; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011; Potgieter, 2012).

### Limitations

Since the present study was limited to predominantly early career back females enrolled for an honours degree in Business Management at a South African higher education distance learning institution, the findings cannot be generalised to other occupational contexts. Furthermore, given the exploratory nature of the research design, this study can yield no statements about causation. Associations between the variables have

therefore been interpreted rather than established. These findings thus need to be replicated with broader samples across different occupational groups and economic sectors before more comprehensive conclusions can be drawn about the relationship between individuals' emotional intelligence and their psychosocial employability attributes. Longitudinal studies should be conducted to investigate the causality of the relationship between individuals' emotional intelligence and their psychosocial employability attributes.

### Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

Overall, the results provided evidence that individuals' emotional intelligence needs to be considered in developing the employability attributes that they need to sustain their employability in a changing, increasingly uncertain and turbulent employment and occupational world.

Notwithstanding the limitations pointed out, the research contributed valuable new insights about the relationship between the emotional intelligence and psychosocial employability attributes of individuals. Considering the current concerns about youth employability and the advancement of the careers of women in the South African employment equity context, the findings of this research are regarded to be of empirical and practical value.

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