Perceptions of South African managers’ emotional intelligence: a preliminary investigation

P.N. Palmer, C.A. Jansen & M. Coetzee

ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence has become prominent within the management literature as an underlying attribute of effective leadership. The perceptions of 75 participants regarding their senior managers’ emotional intelligence were investigated by using the 360-degree Emotional Competency Profiler (ECP) as a measure of emotional intelligence. The managers who were evaluated by the participants represented 24 South African companies. Results indicated that senior managers in the selected companies rated relatively higher on self-motivation and self-esteem/self-regard than on self-management, integration of head and heart, change resilience and emotional literacy. The implications of the findings are discussed and recommendations for future research are made. This study makes an important contribution to the expanding body of knowledge concerned with the evaluation of attributes related to emotional intelligence that influence the performance of South African business leaders.

INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence is increasingly emphasised as a leader attribute that managers require to improve organisational effectiveness (Coetzee 2005a; Coetzee & Schaap 2004; Ashkanasy & Daus 2005). Global and national changes are impacting South African business environments and, consequently, management practices. The role and function of managers have changed considerably, largely because the organisational, political, economic and technological context in which they operate has changed beyond recognition. Organisations have been delayered; new work organisation concepts have been developed; the variety of communication channels...
that managers have to cope with has increased; social interaction in multi-cultural work environments and team-based organisation of work have become focal issues in the workplace (Kleiner & Pierce 2000; Kinicki & Kreitner 2006; Weiss 2001). McCauley, Russ & Van Velsor (1998) argue that effectiveness in the workplace depends on interpersonal relationships that extend beyond the concept of the traditional interpersonal and teambuilding roles of the manager. Instead, relationships depend on personal qualities and emotionally intelligent behaviour. The focus of managerial development will therefore shift increasingly to the enhancement of leader attributes such as self-management, self-motivation, positive self-esteem, self-reliance and the capacity for interrelating emotionally intelligently with others in specific socio-cultural contexts (Branden 1997; Coetzee 2005a; Dearborn 2002; Lopes, Salovey, Cote & Beers 2005; McCauley et al. 1998).

Managers who are socially well-adapted tend to display emotionally intelligent behaviour (that is, they tend to be aware of their own emotions and how they impact others with their overt behaviour). They also tend to express their emotions more appropriately to others and better read and respond to the emotions of others at work. Emotionally intelligent managers generally tend to be more capable of managing both their own emotions and those of others in the workplace (Cooper & Sawaf 2000; Goleman 2001; Palmer, Gardner & Stough 2003). Studies conducted by Lopes, Brackett, Nezlek, Schutz, Sellin & Salovey (2004) and Lopes et al. (2005) have demonstrated that the ability to manage emotions contributes positively to the quality of social interactions.

Emerging empirical evidence supports the link between leadership ability (particularly transformational leadership) and the abilities related to emotional intelligence (Ashkanasy & Daus 2005; Coetzee & Schaap 2004; Dearborn 2002; Gergen 1994; Higgs & Rowland 2002; McCauley et al. 1998; Stein & Book 2000; Stuart & Pauquet 2001; Weick 1995; Wolmarans 2002). Managerial effectiveness and bottom-line business performance are generally positively associated with transformational leadership attributes (Barling, Slater & Kelloway 2000). Transformational leadership is the manager’s ability to motivate subordinates to achieve beyond what was originally thought possible (Sivanathan & Fekken 2002). In this regard, identifying, understanding and managing emotions – abilities related to emotional intelligence – have been found to be positively associated with transformational leadership (Ashkanasy & Daus 2005; Coetzee & Schaap 2004). Rubin, Munz & Bommer (2004) also found that the ability to recognise emotion positively predicted transformational leadership ability.

Emotionally intelligent managers are thought to achieve greater overall organisational performance (Miller 1999). They appear to be more committed to their organisation, and use positive emotions to envision major improvements in organisational functioning (Palmer et al. 2003). Moreover, emotionally intelligent managers are thought to use emotions to improve their decision-making. They seem
to be able to instil a sense of enthusiasm, trust and cooperation within and among employees (George 2000; Stuart & Pauquet 2001). Collins (2001) found that managers who had higher emotion management skills had subordinates who had higher organisational commitment.

This research sets out to investigate workplace perceptions regarding South African senior managers’ emotional intelligence. In this regard, the research aims to contribute to the expanding body of knowledge concerned with the evaluation of attributes related to emotional intelligence that influence the performance of South African business leaders.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Although the construct emotional intelligence is still in a stage of active development and, as such, it is thus not possible to be strongly assertive as to the core properties of the construct, four findings are emerging that provide an early picture of emotional intelligence: (1) emotional intelligence is distinct from, but positively related to, other intelligences. More specifically, it is the intelligence (the ability to grasp abstractions) applied to the life domain of emotions; (2) emotional intelligence is an individual difference, where some people are more endowed, and others are less so; (3) emotional intelligence develops over a person’s life span and can be enhanced through training; and (4), emotional intelligence involves particular abilities to reason intelligently about emotions, including identifying and perceiving emotion (in oneself and others), as well as the skills to understand and to manage those emotions successfully (Ashkanasy & Daus 2005; Cilliers 2004; Conte 2005; Locke 2005; Matthews, Zeidner & Roberts 2002; Mayer, Caruso & Salovey 1999; Mayer & Salovey 1997). It is through reason that individuals identify the emotions they are experiencing, discover the beliefs and values that gave rise to it, and decide what action, if any, to take on the face of it (Locke 2005).

The literature distinguishes between ability models of emotional intelligence and the so-called ‘mixed models’ of emotional intelligence (Mandell & Pherwani 2003). The ability model defines emotional intelligence as a set of abilities that involves perceiving and reasoning abstractly with information that emerges from feelings. This model has been supported by the research of Mayer et al. (1999); Mayer, DiPaolo & Salovey (1990); Mayer & Salovey (1997); and Salovey & Mayer (1990). The mixed model incorporates the underlying abilities postulated by the ability model of emotional intelligence and defines emotional intelligence as a set of abilities that includes social behaviours, traits and competencies. The mixed model approach is supported by the research of Ashkanasy, Härterl & Daus (2003), Bar-On (1997), Ciarrochi, Chan & Caputi (2000), Cooper & Sawaf (2000), Goleman (2001) and Wolmarans (2002).

The common thread that runs through the definitions and models of emotional intelligence appears to be the emphasis on cognitive, affective and social aspects of
emotionally intelligent behaviour. The cognitive aspect of emotionally intelligent
behaviour relates to the intelligent reasoning about the emotions one is experiencing
(Cooper & Sawaf 2000; Eisenberg, Cumberland & Spinrad 1998; Gardner 1983;
George 2000; Goleman 1998; Martinez-Pons 2000; Mayer & Salovey 1997; Orbach
1999; Salovey & Mayer 1990; Wolmarans 2002). The cognitive behavioural aspect
includes the individual’s ability to conduct introspection, which involves identifying
the contents and processes of one’s own mind (Locke 2005). It is only through
introspection that individuals can monitor such things as their defensive reactions,
their emotional responses and their causes (Locke 2005). Abilities and competencies
associated with the cognitive aspect of emotionally intelligent behaviour include, for
example, emotional literacy and self-motivation (Wolmarans 2002).

The term ‘emotion’ refers to individuals’ affective state, which includes emotions
and mood (George 2000). The affective aspect of emotionally intelligent behaviour
refers in this regard to individuals’ ability to honestly assess how their self-regard
influences their affective state. It also includes the ability to harness one’s emotions
and mood as a source of energy to positively influence one’s well-being, goals, plans,
survival and social role performance (Bar-On 1997; Cooper & Sawaf 2000; George
2002; Martinez-Pons 2000; Orbach 1999). Abilities and competencies associated with
the affective aspect of emotionally intelligent behaviour include, for example, self-
regard/self-esteem, emotional independence (being self-directed and self-controlled),
social responsibility (having a social consciousness), self-management (harnessing
energy to create a state of wellness), stress tolerance and optimism (Bar-On 1997;
Wolmarans 2002).

The social aspect of emotionally intelligent behaviour relates to the ability to
notice and make distinctions between other individuals, in particular between their
moods, temperaments, motivations and intentions, and to use that information to
regulate and guide one’s thinking and actions in achieving one’s goals in a socially
acceptable manner (Bar-On 1997; Cooper & Sawaf 2000; Eisenberg et al. 1998; Fox &
Spector 2000; Gardner 1983; Goleman 1998; Saarni 1997; Thorndike 1966;
Wolmarans 2002). Abilities and competencies associated with the social aspect of
emotionally intelligent behaviour include interpersonal relations, self-actualisation
and change resilience (Bar-On 1997; Wolmarans 2002).

Based on these cognitive, affective and social aspects of emotionally intelligent
behaviour, which are incorporated in the mixed model approach to emotional
intelligence, the term ‘emotional intelligence’ is for the purposes of this study defined
as a particular set of learned abilities and knowledge-building attitudes that enable
managers to tap into their feelings and emotions as a source of energy to foster self-
understanding, personal effectiveness in interpersonal relations and the ability to
achieve personal goals in a socially and culturally appropriate manner (Coetzee
2005a; George 2000; Creed & Scully 2001; Mayer & Salovey 1997; Saarni 1997;
Worline, Wrzesniewski & Rafaeli 2002).
Leadership concerns the interaction of managers with other individuals. According to Wong & Law (2002), once social interactions are involved, emotional awareness and emotional regulation become important factors affecting the quality of the interactions between managers and their subordinates. Leadership researchers have argued that effective leadership behaviour fundamentally depends upon the manager’s ability to solve complex social problems that arise in organisations (Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacobs & Fleishman 2002; Zaccaro, Mumford, Connelly, Marks & Gilbert 2000). In this regard, House & Aditya (1997) view emotional intelligence as an important managerial attribute. Emotional intelligence is regarded as being more important in affecting the job success and performance of managers than traditional general mental intelligence (Kanfer & Kantrowitz 2002; Wong & Law 2002).

Goleman (2001) claims that the evidence from managerial competency research shows that, whilst for all jobs emotional intelligence is twice as important for high performance as IQ and technical competencies, for leadership roles it accounts for 85% of the variance in high performing individuals. According to Goleman (2001), emotional intelligence made the crucial difference between mediocre leaders and the best. The top performers showed significantly greater strengths in a range of emotional competencies, among them influence, team leadership, political awareness, self-confidence and achievement drive. On average, close to 90% of leaders’ success in their role was attributable to emotional intelligence.

**EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AS MEASURED BY THE 360-DEGREE EMOTIONAL COMPETENCY PROFILER (ECP)**

The model of emotional competence proposed by Wolmarans (1998, 2002) is a mixed model approach to emotional intelligence. It is particularly relevant to this research, as it is applicable to the South African organisational context and allows for a 360-degree assessment of an individual’s emotional competence. Multi-rater assessment instruments (360-degree assessment instruments) have become increasingly prominent as a personal development tool. The multi-rater process is now being used in many major organisations as an integral part of their management development processes (Landy & Conte 2004; Theron & Roodt 2001).

The purpose of the multi-rater process is to provide accurate feedback, information on critical behaviours for success and direction for individual development (Landy & Conte 2004; Morical 1999). A 360-degree system collects performance assessments from supervisors, peers, clients, subordinates and the ratees themselves (Wells 1999). These assessments are compiled into a feedback report that provides the ratee with comprehensive feedback on his or her performance and
competence (Byars & Rue 2004; Theron & Roodt 2001). Multi-rater assessment thus fulfils the need for providing the individual with a more holistic and useful set of feedback criteria, which can greatly facilitate personal development (Theron & Roodt 2001).

The 360-degree Emotional Competency Profiler (ECP) is a statistically validated 360° (multi-rater) assessment tool, requiring the self-assessment of the individual who is being assessed and at least three other individuals to evaluate the individual being assessed. According to Wolmarans (2002), the purpose of the ECP is to give the individual an opportunity to look at emotional skills in a ‘mirror’ through their own eyes; behaviour through the eyes of other people, as indicated by the ratings of others; and strengths and development areas.

The aim of the ECP is to enable individuals to capitalise on their strengths and improve in the areas that might prevent them from achieving their full potential. As a 360° assessment tool, the ECP provides information on a person’s strong points and areas for growth in terms of emotional intelligence. It also provides information on the importance of the particular behaviour, which assists in focusing energy on development efforts. The 360° assessment approach allows for more objective evaluation of an individual’s performance and is effective in improving performance (Landy & Conte 2004). The competencies covered in the ECP relate to behaviours that the ratee can easily act on and that can easily be translated into a development plan.

The emotional intelligence competencies measured by the ECP are based on a content analysis of contemporary leadership competency requirements as determined by various authors and service providers (Wolmarans 1998). The ECP divides emotional intelligence into seven major clusters of emotional competencies. Wolmarans & Martins (2001) labelled these clusters of emotional competencies as emotional literacy, self-esteem/self-regard, self-management, self-motivation, change resilience, inter-personal relations and integration of the head and heart.

**Emotional literacy**

Emotional literacy represents an awareness of the ebb and flow of one’s own and other people’s emotions, an understanding of what causes the emotions, and the skill to interact at an emotional level in an appropriate way, at the right time, with the right person, within the boundaries of a particular context. An advanced level of emotional literacy is demonstrated by an ability and willingness to acknowledge and apologise for emotional hurt caused, to express sincere regret and to restore damaged relationships sensitively and sensibly (Wolmarans & Martins 2001).

**Self-esteem/self-regard**

Self-esteem/self-regard refers to an honest, objective and realistic assessment of, and respect for, one’s own worth as an equal human being. It includes unconditional,
non-defensive acceptance of ones talents, values, skills and shortcomings. A high level of self-esteem is demonstrated by the courage to act in accordance with personal values and convictions, in the face of opposition, and the ability to admit one’s mistakes in public and even laugh at oneself when appropriate (Wolmarans & Martins 2001).

**Self-management**

Self-management is the ability to manage stress and harness energy to create a state of wellness and a healthy balance between body, mind and soul, without overindulging in one area at the expense of another. An advanced state of self-management is demonstrated by the ability to remain calm in the face of conflict and provocation, eventually minimising defensiveness and restoring rationality with the aggravated party (Wolmarans & Martins 2001).

**Self-motivation**

Self-motivation is the ability to create a challenging vision and set stretching goals; to remain focused and optimistic in spite of setbacks; to take action every day and remain committed to a cause; and to take responsibility for one’s successes and failures. A high level of self-motivation is demonstrated by the ability to ‘hang in there’ when others give up, as well as the judgement to change direction when it is time to move on (Wolmarans & Martins 2001).

**Change resilience**

Change resilience is the ability to remain flexible and open to new ideas and people, advocating the imperative for change and innovation when appropriate, with due concern and consideration for the emotional impact of change on people. An advanced level of change resilience is demonstrated by an ability to cope with ambiguity and to thrive on chaos, without forcing premature closure, and to get re-energised by the beautiful scenes encountered along the way, as well as the anticipation of the unknown (Wolmarans & Martins 2001).

**Inter-personal relations**

Inter-personal relations are underpinned by an intuitive understanding of, and deep level of caring and compassion for, people; a real concern for their well-being, growth and development, and joy and recognition for their successes. It involves relating to others in such a way that they are motivated by high expectations and willing to commit themselves to a cause. It includes both the ability to lead a team and to contribute to a team to achieve results. An advanced level of relationship competence
is demonstrated by the ability to make emotional contact with people and to build the kind of trust and loyalty that nurtures long-term relationships (Wolmarans & Martins 2001).

Integration of head and heart

Integration of head and heart implies that a person’s potential is optimised by accessing the functions of both sides of the brain. Decisions are made and problems are solved, with due consideration of both facts and feelings, and with the commitment to create win–win solutions that serve both the goals and the relationships concerned. An advanced level of skill is demonstrated by the ability to turn adversity into opportunity, and making intuitive, inventive, yet implementable breakthroughs in moments of crisis (Wolmarans & Martins 2001).

This research focused on the assessment of senior managers by their peers and subordinates, thus excluding self-assessment by the senior managers that participated in the research. In terms of practical implications, the ratings of ‘others’ (such as peers and subordinates) are regarded as more objective and tend to reflect higher rater agreement than self-ratings (Harris & Schaubroeck 1988). Despite the alleged gains from self-ratings, empirical research shows frequent lack of agreement between self-ratings and those provided by other sources (Harris & Schaubroeck 1988; Mabe & West 1982; Thornton 1980). Self-ratings also tend to be significantly higher than either peer or supervisor ratings (Coetzee 2005a; Harris & Schaubroeck 1988; Landy & Conte 2004).

In view of the foregoing, the purpose of the study was to investigate the emotional intelligence of a sample of senior managers in the South African organisational context as rated by their peers and subordinates. In this regard, the research aims to make a contribution to the expanding body of knowledge concerned with the evaluation of attributes related to emotional intelligence that influence the performance of South African business leaders.

METHOD

Participants

The participants in this study were 31 senior managers from 24 South African companies. The sample constituted one coloured male, two black males, two white females and 26 white males (with the latter group representing 85% of the total sample of senior managers). A purposive or judgemental sampling method was used with a view to making the sample representative of the population. In terms of this sampling method, the quality of the sample depends on the expertise of the researchers, bearing in mind that the accuracy of judgement samples cannot be enhanced by increasing their size (Nel, Radel & Loubser 1988: 295).
Although the participants distributed the questionnaire to three raters each (thus a total of 93 questionnaires), only 75 questionnaires were returned, yielding a response rate of 81%. The raters were non-randomly selected to include peers and subordinates that were well acquainted with their senior managers’ leadership style.

Measuring instrument

The 360-degree Emotional Competency Profiler (ECP) (Wolmarans & Martins 2001) was used in the present study. The ECP consists of seven scales and 46 items: Emotional literacy (6 items); Self-esteem/self-regard (6 items); Self-management (6 items); Self-motivation (6 items); Change resilience (7 items); Interpersonal relations (9 items); Integration of head and heart (6 items). The ECP uses two four-point Likert scales to measure levels of current emotional intelligence competence and the importance of those emotional intelligence behaviours to the individual being assessed. The higher the mean score on the current behaviour scale, the higher the level of emotional intelligence demonstrated by the individual. The higher the mean score on the importance of behaviour scale, the more important is the emotional intelligence behaviour.

The ECP is virtually self-administering. All necessary instructions are given in the questionnaire. The ECP has no time limit, and respondents are requested to assess all the emotional intelligence behaviours. ECP scoring generates mean scores for each scale (current level of behaviour and importance of the behaviour) for each of the subscales of emotional intelligence. Content validity of the ECP was built into the instrument by developing a construct definition of each emotional intelligence behavioural cluster. Items were written to cover all areas of the identified construct for each of the seven emotional intelligence clusters. Factor analysis indicates that the items in the subtest clusters possess acceptable internal consistency (Wolmarans & Martins 2001).

In terms of reliability, Cronbach coefficient alphas for the seven emotional intelligence competencies vary from 0.863 (Emotional literacy), 0.872 (Self-esteem), 0.851 (Self-management), 0.911 (Self-motivation), 0.933 (Change resilience), 0.953 (Interpersonal relations) to 0.903 (Integration of head and heart), which are generally acceptable (Sekaran 2000). Support for the satisfactory psychometric properties of the questionnaire was also found by Coetzee (2005a).

Procedure

The non-randomly selected raters were approached by the participating managers, who briefed them on the rationale underlying the study. As the items of the ECP are self-explanatory, no specific training on the emotional intelligence competencies was provided to the raters. The process applicable to the completion of the questionnaires
was also explained to the raters. Upon completion of the questionnaires, feedback was given to the participating managers on their personal results. The questionnaires were scored electronically.

Statistical analysis

The statistical analysis was carried out with the help of the SAS program (SAS Institute 2000). Cronbach alpha coefficients were calculated to assess the internal consistency (reliability) of the measuring instrument (Clark & Watson 1995). As a result of the research aim of this study, only descriptive statistics (that is, frequencies, means and standard deviations) were calculated for the subscales. The subscale item ratings were also statistically ranked from the highest to the lowest mean average scores as rated by the respondents. For the purpose of this research, only the frequencies, means and standard deviations of the five highest ranked and five lowest ranked subscale items were investigated in order to identify the emotional intelligence strengths and development areas of the managers concerned.

RESULTS

The Cronbach alpha coefficients of the ECP were all higher than 0.77 and considered to be acceptable compared to the guideline of $\alpha > 0.70$ (Nunnally & Bernstein 1994). Table 1 reports on the means and standard deviations for the subscales of the ECP in terms of current behaviour and importance of behaviour, as measured by peers and subordinates. The mean scores of the subscale are ranked in descending order. Table 2 presents, in descending order, the five highest ranked mean score results per subscale item for both the current behaviour and the importance of behaviour as measured by peers and subordinates. In the case of current behaviour, the five highest ranked items indicate the current strengths of the managers as rated by their peers and subordinates. Table 3 presents, also in descending order, the five lowest ranked mean score results per subscale item for both the current behaviour and the importance of behaviour as measured by peers and subordinates. Again, in the case of current behaviour, the five lowest ranked items indicate the current development areas of the managers as rated by their peers and subordinates.
### Table 1: Means and standard deviations of subscales: Current behaviour versus importance of behaviour (Other ratings) (N=75)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Current behaviour</th>
<th>Importance of behaviour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-motivation</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>0.669</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem/self-regard</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>0.686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal relations</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>0.693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-management</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>0.724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration of head and heart</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>0.664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change resilience</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>0.692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional literacy</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>0.720</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2: Five highest ranked items (N=75)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale and item</th>
<th>Current behaviour</th>
<th>Importance of behaviour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-esteem/self-regard</strong></td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>0.660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Willing to take on challenges</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-motivation</strong></td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>0.665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Follows through on what he/she starts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-motivation</strong></td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>0.685</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Remains committed to a cause</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-esteem/self-regard</strong></td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>0.663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Takes responsibility for his/her own thoughts, feelings and actions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-esteem/self-regard</strong></td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>0.701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Walks the talk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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From Table 1, it is evident that respondents view the intra-personal emotional intelligence competencies, self-motivation and self-esteem/self-regard as important, followed by interpersonal relations. Table 2 explains the specific emotional intelligence behaviours that are regarded as important by peers and subordinates. In terms of self-motivation, these include the ability to remain focused on vision and goals, to follow through on what one starts, and to remain committed to a cause in spite of obstacles. The willingness to take on challenges and walking the talk appear to be the specific emotional intelligence behaviours regarded as important in terms of the self-esteem/self-regard scale.

Table 1 indicates that the current behaviour of the rated managers is relatively aligned with the perceived importance attached to self-motivation and self-esteem/self-regard. As presented in Table 2, a high level of self-motivation is attributed to the rated managers in view of their demonstrated ability to follow through on what they

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**Table 3: Five lowest ranked items (N=75)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale and item</th>
<th>Current behaviour</th>
<th>Scale and item</th>
<th>Importance of behaviour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional literacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Facilitates repairing of relationships/emotional damage</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>0.660</td>
<td>Emotional literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Cares about others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emotional literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Integration of head and heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Balances different aspects of wellness (body, mind and soul)</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>0.665</td>
<td>Integration of head and heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47. Build consensus on common ground</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emotional literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Accepts criticism and learns from it</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>0.685</td>
<td>Emotional literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. Identifies underlying emotional causes of conflict</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>0.672</td>
<td>Integration of head and heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change resilience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emotional literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Chooses the right time to deal with emotional issues</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>0.685</td>
<td>Emotional literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Interprets other people’s emotions correctly</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>0.672</td>
<td>Emotional literacy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
start and to remain committed to a cause. They are also rated as having high self-esteem/self-regard, being willing to take on challenges and taking responsibility for their own thoughts, feelings and actions by ‘walking the talk’.

As shown in Table 1, emotional literacy obtained the lowest mean score in terms of both current behaviour and importance of behaviour. In this regard, emotional literacy appears to be a development area for the rated managers. In particular, as indicated in Table 3, the ability to choose the right time to deal with emotional issues, facilitating the repairing of relationships and emotional damage, interpreting other people’s emotions and showing that one cares about others seem to be the key development areas.

**DISCUSSION**

The goal of this study was to investigate workplace perceptions regarding South African senior managers’ emotional intelligence. Overall, the managers who participated in this study were perceived to be stronger in terms of the cognitive aspect that relates to emotionally intelligent behaviour (that is, they appeared to be strong in using their cognitive capacity to solve problems and in directing their behaviour in social encounters to achieve personal goals). The affective and social aspects of emotionally intelligent behaviour appeared to be a development area. The affective aspect relates to the self-regulatory and self-management abilities of the managers and their ability to access, generate, express and regulate their emotions appropriately. The social aspect relates to the managers’ ability to manage their emotions appropriately in their social relationships (Bar-On 1997; Cooper & Sawaf 2000; George 2002; Martinez-Pons 2000; Orbach 1999). Similar findings are reported by Coetzee (2005b) in terms of a study conducted among 50 South African managers.

As expected from previous research, managers in the Western organisational context tend to support rational approaches to decision-making, which emphasise creating challenging visions, setting stretching goals and demonstrating self-confidence in achieving these in an objective, detached and hard-headed manner. Emotions are typically put aside as logic is followed wherever it leads (Myers, McCaulley, Quenk & Hammer 1998).

The low mean scores obtained for emotional literacy and higher mean scores for self-motivation and self-esteem/self-regard could imply that the group of managers are cognitively strong in terms of driving the business goals and their own performance, but are uncomfortable in dealing with their own and others’ emotions. The results of such one-sided decision-making can negatively influence managerial and business performance (Molpus 1997). The low rating in emotional literacy could also account for the low mean scores obtained for the items related to the integration
of head and heart and change resilience in Table 3. This includes the ability to identify underlying emotional causes of conflict (integration of head and heart) and accepting criticism and learning from it (change resilience).

The low mean scores obtained for self-management, which refer to the ability to balance the different aspects of wellness (that is, the body, mind and soul) is interesting to note. Self-management was rated with emotional literacy as being of lesser importance than the other emotional intelligence competencies, such as self-motivation and self-esteem/self-regard. Proponents of the emotional intelligence concept argue that emotional intelligence affects one’s physical and mental health as well as one’s career achievements (Goleman 2001; Kanfer & Kantrowitz 2002). Self-management and emotional literacy, which in this regard assume stress management and conflict handling skills respectively, appear thus to be the important development areas for managers having to adapt to and deal with the constant turbulence of an uncertain marketplace.

Emotional intelligence taps into the extent to which people’s cognitive capabilities are informed by emotions and the extent to which emotions are cognitively managed (George 2000; Mayer & Salovey 1997). The practical implications of these findings suggest that managers who are unable to maintain a degree of control over their emotional life tend to fight inner battles that sabotage the ability for focused work and clear thoughts (Goleman 2002; Stuart & Pauquet 2001). Unclear thinking and a lack of focus may in turn impact on a leader’s performance and decision-making ability, resulting in decreased productivity and an overall decline in organisational success (Stuart & Pauquet 2001). According to Cooper & Sawaf (2000), emotionally intelligent managers with the ability to think clearly whilst being in tune with themselves and others (thus, ‘integrating the head and heart’ and being emotionally literate) would thus be required to lead an emotionally intelligent organisation.

Stuart & Pauquet (2001) and Wolmarans (1998) point out that emotions are a vital “activating energy” for ethical values such as trust, resilience and integrity in the South African business environment. Emotions also provide the energy for social capital, which represents a manager’s ability to build and maintain trusting, profitable business relationships (Whitney 1996; Wolmarans & Martins 2001). Moreover, emotional intelligence includes the ability to motivate self and others as a vital ingredient for successful leadership (Goleman 2002).

Day (2000) emphasises the importance of emotional intelligence in managerial effectiveness by citing self-awareness (for example emotional awareness and self-confidence), self-regulation (for example, self-control, trustworthiness and adaptability) and self-motivation (for example, commitment, initiative and optimism) as specific examples of the type of intra-personal competence that is associated with managerial development initiatives. Moreover, emotional intelligence involves being
aware of one’s feelings as they occur. This awareness of emotions is the main
effective emotional intelligence competency on which others, like self-control, are built (Stuart
& Pauquet 2001).

According to Dearborn (2002) and McCauley et al. (1998), the creative challenge
for industrial and organisational psychologists and human resource practitioners is to
enhance organisational effectiveness with a learning model for managers. Such a
model should enable self-directed, feedback-intensive and challenging developmental
assignments that promote the development of individuals’ emotional intelligence. Ultimately, self-awareness, self-directed learning and practices with coaching create the results. Managers need to recognise how they are perceived by others and should
benchmark that information against how they perceive themselves. Behavioural
changes occur after the establishment of a self-directed learning plan and the granting
of permission to a trusted associate to coach the developing manager as he/she experiments with and practises different behaviour. The developing manager changes an approach, responds to or engages differently with others, receives positive feedback
related to the changes, and begins to learn how to demonstrate more emotionally
intelligent behaviour. As managers experience improved relationships due to their
changed behaviour, they psychologically record the experience because it feels good. People naturally repeat experiences that they remember as feeling good as this
enhances levels of self-esteem (Coetzee 2005a; Dearborn 2002; McCauley et al. 1998).

This study has investigated the emotional intelligence competencies of a sample
of South African senior managers as perceived by their peers and subordinates. Key
strengths and development areas were identified. However, the findings should be
interpreted carefully in light of several limitations in the methods used in the present
study. Firstly, the measuring instrument is subject to some criticisms. In terms of 360-
degree assessments, Kenny & De Paulo (1993) found that raters tend to use their own preference as a standard against which they rate others. Rater biases can develop as
systematic variance in 360-degree competency assessments, which has nothing to do
with the actual performance of the individual; instead it reflects the bias of the rater.
This could be due to attributive observations, affective/emotional responses,
expectancies and motivations (Theron & Roodt 2000; Van Wyk, Boshoff & Bester
2003). Ratees and raters should therefore be informed that the aim of 360-degree
assessments is to promote development and growth.

Secondly, the method used in choosing the sample did not include control for
many biographical factors, and the sample is small. The data are therefore limited to
the demographic confines of the population, which is predominantly white males in
senior managerial positions.

Areas for future research include verification of the 360-degree Emotional
Competency Profiler in a broader multi-rater context, including different race and
gender groups, as well as self-ratings compared to ratings by peers, subordinates and
superiors to test possible generalisations of this study. Other measures of emotional
intelligence could also be considered to identify the core emotional intelligence strengths of South African managers. Research questions that need to be answered in the emotional intelligence domain are whether and how the underlying abilities and competencies can be trained and whether acquiring these capabilities will improve managerial effectiveness. If managers can be trained to enhance their emotional intelligence, will it not only improve their effectiveness as leaders in highly competitive and unstable business environments, but their self-actualising potential as well? The potential value of further research in emotional intelligence will be realised only if the insights gained can be applied in increasing the well-being of managers and facilitating their success as business leaders.

Notwithstanding the limitations, the investigation of the emotional intelligence competencies of South African managers seems a worthwhile area for further exploration. Increased insight in this area will yield both scientific insight and practical benefits to the body of knowledge that concerns itself with attributes that relate to emotional intelligence and influence the effectiveness of South African business leaders.

REFERENCES


PERCEPTIONS OF SOUTH AFRICAN MANAGERS’ EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE


