

Employability, Emotional Intelligence and Career Preparation Support Satisfaction among Adolescents in the School-to-work Transition Phase

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This study explored the relationship between the employability and career support satisfaction and emotional intelligence of a convenience sample of predominantly black (N = 590) South African adolescents (mean age 17, males 43%, females 57%). Data were collected using the South African Employability Inventory (Beukes, 2009) and the Assessing Emotions Scale (Schutte, Malouff, & Bhullar, 2007). A survey design and quantitative statistical procedures were used to achieve the research objective. Multiple regression analyses indicated that emotional intelligence contributes significantly to explaining the proportion of variance in the participants' employability scores. Emotional intelligence and employability were also significantly related to the participants' satisfaction with the career preparation support they received. The findings may be used to inform career services for young adults preparing for the world of work.

Keywords: career preparation support, early career development, employability, emotional intelligence

Young people entering the world of work have to deal with the challenge of creating a career in a world with decreased employment opportunities and diminished job security, fast-paced technology and increasing personal responsibility for constant up-skilling, employability and lifelong learning (Marock, 2008; Pool & Sewell, 2007). Increasing concerns about the employability of school leavers within the South African context has resulted in much attention being focused on the development of employability skills in formal education by means of formal career preparation support programmes (Marock, 2008). Helping adolescents in the school-to-work transition phase of their lives to prepare for the world of work or further education is regarded as a vital aspect of their early career development (Herr, Cramer & Niles, 2004). Career preparation support assists adolescents in establishing a career identity, discovering skills and interests, gathering information about various career paths and making concrete decisions about the careers they would like to pursue (Feldman, 2002; Zunker, 2006).

Research also increasingly recognises emotional intelligence as an important attribute of people's employability (Pool & Sewell, 2007; Yorke & Knight, 2002), career decision-making (Brown, George-Curran, & Smith, 2003) and career well-being and satisfaction (Kidd, 2008; Sinclair, 2009). According to Young, Paseluikho and Valach (1997), emotions are related to individuals' career goals, plans and needs, and serve to energise action and give context and meaning to the construction of a career for both adolescents and adults. Emotions in the careers context, however, have generally received little attention in South Africa and, until recently, have been largely absent from vocational psychology worldwide (Kidd, 2004, 2008). Similarly, there seems to be a paucity of research on the relationship between individuals' emotional intelligence and their employability and satisfaction with career support in the multi-cultural South African context.

The present study aims to explore the relationship between individuals' employability and emotional intelligence and whether their satisfaction with the career preparation support they receive is influenced by their level of employability and emotional intelligence. The study may reveal important new knowledge that could stimulate further research on employability and emotional intelligence in the South African context and lead to the possible emergence of a new genre of career counselling practices aimed at preparing the young adult for the world of work.

Employability

Beukes (2009) defines employability as the application and continuous development of a range of supportive competencies and attributes through a series of reiterative developmental stages that enhance the individual's opportunities for accessing and sustaining employment opportunities. Beukes's (2009) notion of employability is similar to Pool and Sewell's (2007) view of employability as possessing a set of skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes that make a person more likely to choose and secure occupations in which they can be satisfied and successful, to benefit themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy. Through supportive career services, these skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes may be channelled in a direction that will best lead to maintaining suitable employment opportunities (Beukes, 2009).

Beukes (2009) proposes a self-regulatory employability model (see Figure 1) which consists of a series of reiterative stages which allow individuals to channel their employability competencies effectively in accessing and sustaining employment in the highly competitive and turbulent labour market. Each stage involves a specific development task (regarded as a critical outcome of the specific stage), which in turn is supported by a set of core employability competencies.

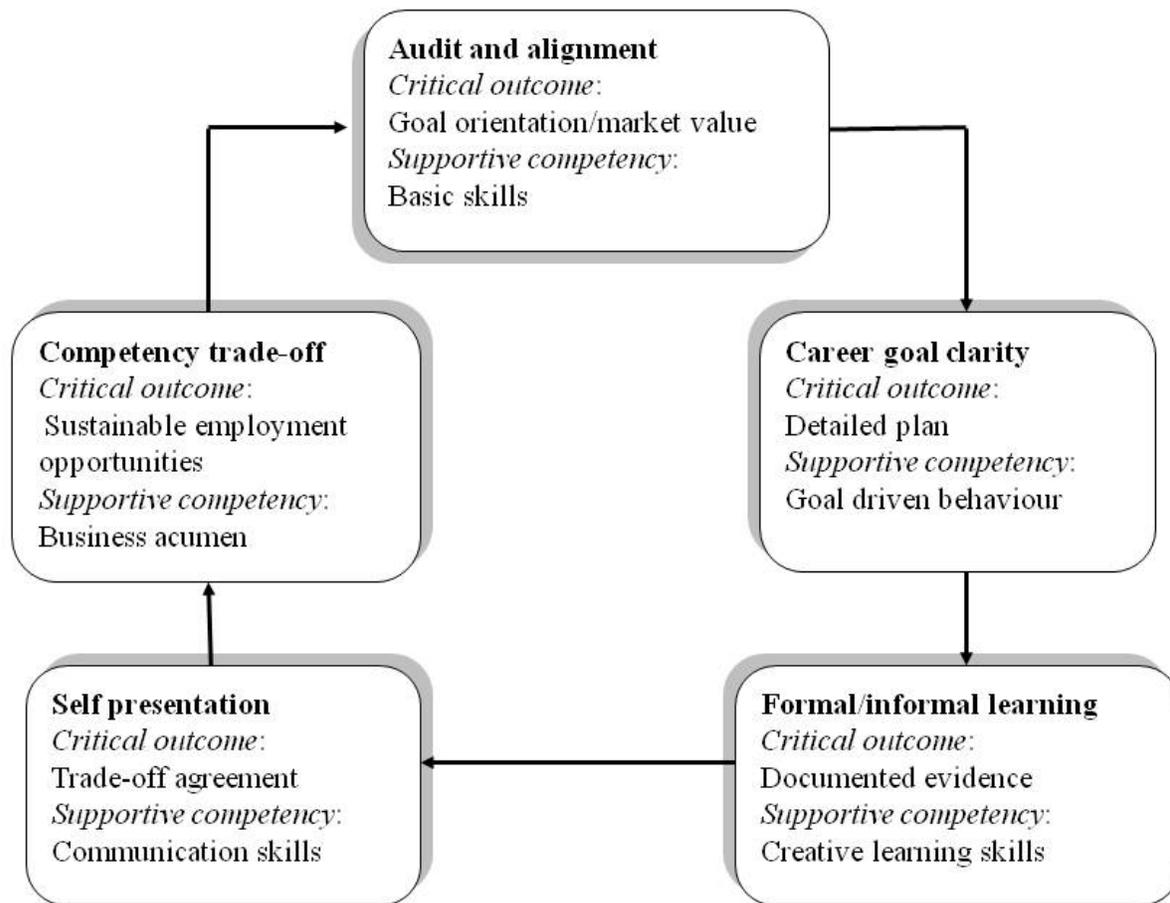


Figure 1. Model of self-regulatory employability (Beukes, 2009).

The *audit and alignment stage* involves the process of conducting an audit on one's competencies in relation to labour demands and employment opportunities. The two critical outcomes for this stage are, firstly, insight into one's market value, and secondly, becoming goal-oriented, which is regarded as one's general orientation (or schema or theory) towards approaching and doing the task, and then evaluating one's performance (Beukes, 2009; Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2000). The audit and alignment process is supported by the following set of basic skills: literacy (reading and writing skills), numeracy, computer literacy, and skills relating to planning, organising and problem solving (Zinzer, 2003; Zunker, 2006).

The *goal clarity stage* involves the process of setting specific career goals in a detailed written plan. The goal-setting process requires the demonstration of goal-driven behaviour which enables individuals to capture their goals as cognitive representations of what they are trying to attain effectively (Beukes, 2009). Goals guide and direct achievement behaviour and enable individuals to measure their progress in a more quantifiable manner (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2000). The *formal and informal learning stage* involves a cognitive openness to lifelong learning (in the form of engaging continuously in both formal and informal learning), which assists individuals in achieving their goals (Werquin, 2008). This stage entails the regular documentation of formal and informal learning, which is supported by the appli-

cation of creative learning skills (Beukes, 2009). Sternberg (2003) regards the development and application of creative and practical (or basic) skills as essential in the career choice and development process and for achieving a sense of subjective career success.

The *self-presentation stage* involves the negotiation of a trade-off agreement between one's competencies (as represented by the clear articulation or communication of one's personal brand) and the potential employment opportunity (as represented by the organisation's offerings) (Beukes, 2009). The critical outcome of this stage is the mutual agreement on this trade-off by both parties. Negotiating a trade-off agreement requires well-developed communication skills, including the ability to share information about oneself, whether written, verbal or non-verbal. Individuals must be able to present and communicate the unique characteristics or attributes that differentiate them from others (Beukes, 2009; Myers, 2006).

The fifth stage, *competency trade-off agreement*, is an outcome of the self-presentation stage and involves the actual trade-off agreed upon in terms of the individuals' competencies and attributes and the organisation's remuneration package. Trading one's competencies for the financial benefits that are associated with new employment experiences allows individuals to increase their repertoire of knowledge, skills and experience, which in turn helps to sustain their present and future em-

employability (Coetzee, 2007). Business acumen (the ability to make sound judgements and quick and effective decisions about one's occupation or trade, and operating effectively in the business world) supports the competency trade-off process. Individuals with a well-developed sense of business acumen generally have the know-how and ability to succeed in business and sustain their employability opportunities (Beukes, 2009).

Emotional Intelligence

The term "emotional intelligence" was originally coined by Salovey and Mayer (1990) to complement the traditional view of general intelligence by emphasising behaviour that requires emotional and behavioural control in social situations (Kanfer & Kantrowitz, 2002). Emotional intelligence can be conceptualised either as an ability (Ciarrochi, Chan, & Caputi, 2000; Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999) or a personality trait (Schutte & Malouff, 1999).

The trait perspective of emotional intelligence is relevant to the present study. Trait emotional intelligence refers to individuals' perceptions of the display of their own and others' typical affective or emotion-related characteristics in daily life (Austin, Parker, Petrides & Saklofske, 2008). From a trait perspective, the term "emotion" refers to the individual's affective state, which includes emotions and mood (George, 2000). According to Van Maanen and Kunda (1989), emotions are the ineffable, self-referential feelings an individual experiences or at least claims to experience in respect of his or her daily performances in the social world. Emotions are generally regarded as the primary motivating forces that arouse, direct and sustain activity (Stuart & Pauquet, 2001). Emotional intelligence therefore describes 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 (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

Salovey and Mayer's (1990) original model of emotional intelligence is relevant to the present study. The model proposes that emotional intelligence consists of a set of four conceptually related mental processes: (1) efficiently handling psychological and social problems, (2) accurately appraising and expressing emotion in the self and others, (3) regulating emotion in the self and others, and (4) using emotions adaptively in order to solve problems and achieve one's goals. The ability to monitor one's own emotional landscape is thought to lead to greater insight and self-knowledge (Goleman, 1998), and guides individuals' thinking and actions in the career exploration and decision-making process (Brown et al., 2003).

Career Preparation Support

Career preparation support is regarded as an essential component of the education of young adults and includes helping adolescents develop important career decision-making skills (Marock, 2008). These include, for example, self-awareness of interests, values, and aspirations, career planning and goal-setting skills, and job search skills (Zunker, 2006). Emmerling and Cherniss (2003) contend that emotions play an important role in the career decision-making process, and developing individuals' emotional intelligence may lead to decisions that more fully satisfy career-related interests, values and aspirations.

Buchner (2007) reports a significant relationship between self-directed career management attitudes and behaviour and emotional intelligence. The fact that emotional intelligence can be learnt implies that individuals exhibit differences in terms of emotional intelligence and explains how they adjust to their

work environments or career-related situations. According to Buchner (2007), these differences can relate to individuals' career attitudes and their personal experiences of career-related stressors. In a similar vein, we hypothesise that individuals' level of emotional intelligence will influence their employability and their satisfaction with the career preparation support they receive.

In the light of the preceding discussions, the following two hypotheses were formulated for the present study:

H1: Individuals' employability is significantly and positively related to their emotional intelligence.

H2: Individuals' satisfaction with the career preparation support they receive is significantly and positively influenced by their employability and emotional intelligence.

Method

Participants

The participants comprised a convenience sample of 590 adolescents (from a total population of 910 in Grades 9 (32%) and 12 (33%), and post-school (adolescents who exited school during the previous year) (35%) from five different secondary schools in Gauteng province, South Africa. Three of these schools were situated in rural areas and classified on the South African national poverty index for schools (Motala & Sayed, 2009) as quintile one to quintile three (relatively poor) schools. The two other schools were situated in more affluent areas and classified on the national poverty index as quintile four and five (relatively wealthy) schools respectively. The three lower quintile schools represented 64% of the sample while the two higher quintile schools represented only 37% of the sample.

The sample was represented by 90% blacks and 10% whites. Males represented 43% and females 57% of the sample. The participants were adolescents in their early career development stage with 90% of the sample between the ages of 15 and 18. The mean average age of the sample was 17.

Measuring Instruments

Participants completed the *South African Employability Inventory* (SAEI) (Beukes, 2009) and the *Assessing Emotions Scale* (AES) (Schutte, Malouff, & Bhullar, 2007). The SAEI (Beukes, 2009) is a self-rated multi-factorial measure designed for South African adolescent and adult populations. The SAEI contains 81 items and five subscales: basic skills (9 items), goal-driven behaviour (16 items), creative learning skills (24 items), communication skills (13 items) and business acumen (19 items). For the purpose of the present study the SAEI contained an additional question relating to the participants' satisfaction with the support they received in preparing for their career. A five-point Likert-type scale was used for subject responses to each of the items. An exploratory factor analysis provided evidence of construct validity as indicated by the five-factor model, which supports the underlying dimensions of employability described by Beukes (2009). In terms of reliability (internal-consistency), Cronbach's alpha coefficients for each subscale range from 0.58 (moderate) to 0.83 (high).

The AES (Schutte et al., 2007) was chosen because it was developed for adolescents and adults. The AES is a 33-item self-report inventory which uses a five-point Likert scale to measure individuals' emotional intelligence traits and consists of four subscales: perception of emotion (10 items), managing own emotions (9 items), managing others' emotions (8 items) and utilisation of emotions (6 items). Validity studies on the AES

justify the various underlying constructs of the four subscales (Chapman & Hayslip, 2006; Ciarrochi et al., 2001; Saklofske, Austin & Minksi, 2003). In terms of reliability (internal consistency) Ciarrochi et al. (2001) report Cronbach alpha coefficients of 0.55 (moderate) to 0.78 (high). Test-retest reliability tests (Schutte, Malouff, Hall, Haggerty, Cooper, Golden & Dornheim, 1998) indicate a coefficient score of 0.78 for total scale scores. Validity studies (Bracket & Mayer, 2003; John & Srivastava, 1999; McCrae & Costa, 1999; Schutte et al., 1998) confirm both the convergent and divergent validity of the AES.

Since the AES has not been standardised for South African populations, scale reliability tests were conducted for the sample group. In the present study the internal consistency coefficients obtained for each sub-scale were only moderate: perception of emotion (0.65), managing own emotions (0.56), managing others' emotions (0.58) and utilisation of emotions (0.54). As in the case of the SAEI, the somewhat lower internal consistency coefficients of the AES variables could be attributed to the life stage, inexperience and demographic background of the participants regarding the traits measured. In line with directives provided by Nunnally (1978) for measuring broad-based trends, the psychometric properties of the instruments were deemed acceptable for the purpose of this research.

Procedure and Data Analysis

Ethical clearance and permission to conduct the survey were obtained from the Department of Education and the headmasters of the five schools that participated in the survey. All Grade 9 and 12 learners and those who had recently exited school were invited to participate in the study voluntarily. The participants attended a session organised for the purpose of completing the questionnaires under the supervision of a professionally trained and registered psychometrist. In terms of ethics, the purpose of the survey was explained and the participants were requested to sign a letter of consent stating that their completion of the questionnaires and returning them to the psychometrist signified their permission to use the results for re-

search purposes only. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed and the participants received feedback on the results.

The Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS, 2005) was used to analyse the data. Pearson product-moment correlations were determined to assess the direction and strength of the relationship between the variables. Standard multiple regression analyses were conducted to identify the AES variables that provide the best explanation for the proportion of the total variance in the scores of the dependent variables (the five SAEI variables and the additional question). Since a number of independent (AES) variables had to be considered, the value of adjusted R^2 was used to interpret the results. In order to counter the probability of a type I error, it was decided to set the significance value at a 95% confidence interval level ($p = 0.05$). The F -test was used to test whether there was a significant regression between the independent and the dependent variables. For the purposes of this study, r -values larger than 0.30 (medium effect) and R^2 values larger than 0.13 (medium effect) (Cohen, 1992) were regarded as practically significant.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The means and standard deviations of each SAEI subscale are presented in Table 1, which shows that *creative learning* ($M = 4.20$; $SD = 0.39$) and *business acumen* ($M = 4.04$; $SD = 0.48$) are indicated as the dominant employability competencies for the total sample. *Basic skills* ($M = 2.66$; $SD = 0.69$) is indicated as the least developed employability competency.

The means and standard deviations of each AES subscale are presented in Table 1, which shows that the participants scored relatively high on three of the four subscales: *managing own emotions* ($M = 4.27$; $SD = 0.46$), *utilisation of emotions* ($M = 4.14$; $SD = 0.56$) and *managing others' emotions* ($M = 4.05$; $SD = 0.53$). The *perception of emotion* variable obtained the lowest mean score ($M = 3.80$; $SD = 0.52$).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics: Means, Standard Deviations and Cronbach Alpha Coefficients

Scale	Means	SD	Cronbach alpha coefficients	Evaluation
<i>South African Employability Inventory (SAEI)</i>				
Basic skills	2.66	0.69	0.58	Moderate
Goal-driven behaviour	3.94	0.54	0.83	High
Creative learning skills	4.20	0.39	0.76	High
Communication skills	3.81	0.54	0.83	High
Business acumen	4.04	0.48	0.80	High
<i>Assessing Emotions Scale (AES)</i>				
Perception of emotion	3.80	0.52	0.65	Moderate
Managing own emotions	4.27	0.46	0.56	Moderate
Managing others' emotions	4.05	0.53	0.58	Moderate
Utilisation of emotion	4.14	0.56	0.54	Moderate

Note. N=590

Inter-correlations Between Employability and Emotional Intelligence

The results reported in Table 2 show, with the exception of the SAEI *basic skills* variable, positive and practically significant associations between the emotional intelligence and employability variables. No significant relationships are observed between the AES variables, *managing own emotions* and *managing others' emotions* and the SAEI *basic skills* variable.

Multiple Regression Analyses

In terms of the SAEI and AES variables, Table 3 shows that, with the exception of the small percentage of variance explained in the SAEI *basic skills* variable ($R^2 = 1\%$, small practical effect size) (Cohen, 1992), the other regression models explained medium ($R^2 = 19\%$) to large ($R^2 = 28$) practical effect percentages of variance in the dependent variables.

Table 3 shows that the AES perception of emotion variable contributes significantly to the variance in the SAEI variables *basic skills* ($\beta = 0.11$; $p = 0.01$) and *business acumen* ($\beta = 0.18$; $p = 0.00$) variables. The *managing own emotions* variable contributes significantly to the variance in the following SAEI variables: *goal driven behaviour* ($\beta = 0.26$; $p = 0.00$), *creative learning skills* ($\beta = 0.39$; $p = 0.00$), *communication skills* ($\beta = 0.20$; $p = 0.00$) and *business acumen* ($\beta = 0.24$; $p = 0.00$). The *managing others' emotions* variable contributes significantly to the variance in the following SAEI variables: *goal driven behaviour* ($\beta = 0.11$; $p = 0.01$), *creative learning skills* ($\beta = 0.21$; $p = 0.00$) and *communication skills* ($\beta = 0.18$; $p = 0.00$). The utilisation of emotion variable only contributes significantly to the variance in the SAEI *business acumen* variable ($\beta = 0.20$; $p = 0.00$).

Although the regression models shown in Table 4 explain only small percentages of practical significance ($R^2 = 1\%$ and $R^2 = 11\%$) between the AES (*managing others' emotions*) and SAEI variables (*business acumen*, *creative learning skills*, *goal driven behaviour*), useful pointers regarding the influence of the participants' emotional intelligence and employability on their level of satisfaction with career preparation support exist.

In terms of career preparation support, Table 4 shows that the AES *managing others' emotions* ($\beta = 0.12$; $p = 0.003$) and SAEI *business acumen* ($\beta = 0.30$; $p = 0.00$) and *goal driven behaviour* ($\beta = 0.13$; $p = 0.02$) variables contribute significantly and positively to the variance in the participants' satisfaction with the support they received with their career preparation. The

SAEI *creative learning skills* variable ($\beta = -0.16$; $p = 0.001$), however, contributes significantly and negatively to the variance in the participants' satisfaction with the support they received with their career preparation.

Based on these results, H1 (individuals' employability is significantly and positively related to their emotional intelligence) is accepted, while H2 (individuals' satisfaction with the career preparation support they receive is significantly and positively influenced by their employability and emotional intelligence) is only partially accepted.

Discussion

Overall, the results suggest that higher levels of trait emotional intelligence (especially managing one's own emotions) lead to greater confidence in displaying employability-related skills and behaviours. The results also indicate that higher levels of emotional intelligence and employability generally lead to higher levels of satisfaction with the support participants believe they receive in their career preparation. In more precise terms, the results suggest that the participants who indicated a higher ability to perceive and manage their own and others' emotions, and use their emotions to achieve their goals were also more likely to report greater confidence in their ability to set clear and measurable goals (goal-driven behaviour), present and communicate their personal unique attributes, and interface with ease with others (communication skills). In this regard, Carmeli (2003) reports that emotionally intelligent people can induce a positive affect in others, which results in a powerful social influence (charisma).

The participants' confidence in their ability to engage in continuous creative learning appears to be influenced by their ability to manage their own and others' emotions. Those participants who indicated a higher ability in managing and utilising their own emotions were more likely to report greater confidence in their ability to achieve their goals and succeed in the business world (business acumen). The ability to perceive or correctly assess or recognise one's own emotions appears to have influenced the participants' confidence in applying basic skills in seeking new information and learning new skills to achieve their goals. These findings support Salovey and Mayer's (1990) view that emotions help individuals to generate multiple future plans, improve their decision-making processes (because of a better understanding of one's emotional reac-

Table 2

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients: SAEI & AES

South African Employability Inventory (SAEI)					
Assessing Emotions Scale (AES)	Basic skills	Goal driven behaviour	Creative learning skills	Communication skills	Business acumen
Perception of emotion	0.11** +	0.26*** +	0.29*** +	0.28*** +	0.36*** +
Managing own emotions	0.01	0.45*** ++	0.54*** +++	0.38*** ++	0.42*** ++
Managing others' emotions	0.02	0.35*** ++	0.43*** ++	0.35*** ++	0.36*** ++
Utilisation of emotion	0.11** +	0.40*** ++	0.35*** ++	0.35*** ++	0.40*** ++
Overall emotional intelligence	0.77	0.44*** ++	0.48*** ++	0.43*** ++	0.49*** ++

Note. *** $p \leq 0.001$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; * $p \leq 0.05$ (two-tailed); +++ indicates $r \geq 0.50$ (large practical effect size); ++ indicates $0.30 \leq r \leq 0.49$ (medium practical effect size); + indicates $r \leq 0.29$ (small practical effect size); $N=590$

Table 3

Multiple regression analyses: SAEI & AES

Variable	Un-standardised coefficient		Standardised coefficient		<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	Adjusted <i>R Square</i>	<i>R</i>
	<i>b</i>	SE <i>b</i>	β	<i>t</i>				
Basic skills (Constant)	2.11	0.21		10.25	10.25	7.22	0.01+**	0.11 ***
Perception of emotion	0.01	0.01	0.11	2.69	0.01			
Goal-driven behaviour (Constant)	1.36	0.20		6.98	0.00	60.16	0.23++ ***	0.49 ***
Managing own emotions	0.03	0.01	0.26	5.84	0.00			
Utilisation of emotion	0.04	0.01	0.22	5.06	0.00			
Managing others' emotions	0.01	0.01	0.11	2.51	0.01			
Creative learning skills (Constant)	2.19	0.13		16.56	0.00	117.77	0.28+++ ***	0.54 ***
Managing own emotions	0.04	0.004	0.39	9.62	0.00			
Managing others' emotions	0.02	0.004	0.21	5.23	0.00			
Communication skills (Constant)	1.46	0.20		7.27	0.00	46.75	0.19++ ***	0.44 ***
Managing own emotions	0.03	0.01	0.20	4.30	0.00			
Managing others' emotions	0.02	0.01	0.18	4.03	0.00			
Utilisation of emotion	0.03	0.01	0.16	3.67	0.00			
Business acumen (Constant)	1.71	0.17		9.90	0.00	62.58	0.24++ ***	0.49 ***
Managing own emotions	0.03	0.01	0.24	5.73	0.00			
Utilisation of emotion	0.03	0.01	0.20	4.67	0.00			
Perception of emotion	0.01	0.003	0.18	4.32	0.00			

Note. *** $p \leq 0.001$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; * $p \leq 0.05$; + indicates $R^2 \leq 0.12$ (small practical effect size); ++ indicates $0.13 \leq R^2 \leq 0.25$ (medium practical effect size); +++ indicates $R^2 \geq 0.26$ (large practical effect size); N=590

Table 4

Multiple Regression Analyses: Career Preparation Support Satisfaction: SAEI & AES

Variable	Un-standardised coefficient		Standardised coefficient		<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	Adjusted <i>R Square</i>	<i>R</i>
	<i>b</i>	SE <i>b</i>	β	<i>t</i>				
Perceived support in career preparation (Constant)	1.56	0.35		4.50	0.00	23.98	0.11+ ***	0.33 ***
Business acumen	0.49	0.08	0.30	6.06	0.00			
Creative learning skills	-0.31	0.10	-0.16	-3.26	0.001			
Goal-driven behaviour	0.18	0.08	0.13	2.37	0.02			
Perceived support in career preparation (Constant)	2.21	0.24		9.10	0.00	8.67	0.01+ ***	0.12 ***
Managing others' emotions	0.02	0.01	0.12	2.94	0.003			

Note. *** $p \leq 0.001$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; * $p \leq 0.05$; + indicates $R^2 \leq 0.12$ (small practical effect size); N=590

tion), facilitate creative thinking and enhance persistence in challenging tasks.

The results further suggest that the participants who reported greater ability to self-regulate their own emotions and sentiments were more likely to feel highly satisfied with the support they received in preparing for their careers. According to Carmeli (2003), the regulation of one's own emotions and moods results in positive and negative affective states. Emotionally intelligent individuals are adept at placing themselves in positive affective states, and are able to experience negative affective states that have insignificant destructive consequences. Higher levels of satisfaction with career preparation support were also more likely to be reported by those participants who felt highly confident in their ability to display the employability competencies associated with business acumen and goal-driven behaviour. The results, however, indicate that participants who were more likely to engage in creative learning in improving themselves reported higher levels of dissatisfaction with the support they received in their career preparation. Coetzee, Bergh and Schreuder (2010) and Kidd (2008) found in this regard that individuals' perceptions of the support they receive in planning their career development and future career paths significantly influence their sense of career well-being and satisfaction.

These findings seem to corroborate those of a previous study (Brown et al., 2003), which indicated emotional intelligence to be predictive of career decision-making self-efficacy, and vocational exploration and commitment. Brown et al (2003) found that greater confidence in one's ability to complete career-related tasks successfully is associated with increased ability to perceive emotions, to use emotions to assist in thought, to understand emotions, and to regulate emotions in the self and others in order to promote emotional and intellectual growth.

Limitations and Recommendations

Since the present study was limited to a group of predominantly black adolescents in the South African school environment and the early stage of their career development, the findings cannot be generalised to other occupational, age and race contexts. Furthermore, given the exploratory nature of the research design, this study cannot yield any 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 various occupational, age and race groups and economic sectors before more extensive conclusions can be drawn about the relationship between the constructs of concern to this study.

Conclusion

The findings of the study contributed valuable new knowledge regarding the relationship between emotional intelligence and employability, and satisfaction with career preparation support. The associations found between employability and emotional intelligence in the present study focus attention on the practical importance of emotional intelligence in career counselling and assessment, and career preparation support programmes.

Given the argument that emotional intelligence and employability skills can be taught and learnt (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2005; Pool & Sewell, 2007; Jaeger, 2003; Locke, 2005), and that the present research supports the critical role of emotion in the demonstration of employability skills and behaviours, career

counselling practitioners may wish to consider providing career services that increase the emotional intelligence and employability of adolescents who are preparing to enter the world of work by helping them to develop self-empowering career attitudes, skills and behaviours. When considering the influence of emotional intelligence on the participants' satisfaction with the career preparation support they received, it is further recommended that career preparation support programmes incorporate emotional intelligence as a core element of the curriculum.

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