

# The relation between career anchors, emotional intelligence and employability satisfaction among workers in the service industry

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## ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to determine the relationship between the career anchors (measured by the Career Orientations Inventory), emotional intelligence (measured by the Assessing Emotions Scale) and employability satisfaction (measured by a one-item scale) of a random sample of 270 adults employed in the service industry. A quantitative survey design was used. Multiple regression analyses revealed significant relationships between the participants' career anchors, emotional intelligence and employability satisfaction. The results further showed the entrepreneurial creativity, service/dedication to a cause and autonomy career anchors to be significant predictors of emotional intelligence. Employability satisfaction significantly predicted the pure challenge and service/dedication to a cause career anchors. Managing others' emotions significantly predicted employability satisfaction. The findings contribute new knowledge to the field of career psychology and may be used to inform human resource practices concerned with optimising person-job fit and the job and career satisfaction of employees. In the light of the turbulent world of work context, career counsellors may also find the results useful in facilitating proactive career behaviour among employees.

**Key words:** career anchors, career development, emotional intelligence, employability satisfaction

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## Introduction

Creating a career in a world with decreased job security, fast-paced technology and increasing personal responsibility for constant upskilling, employability and lifelong learning are some of the key challenges faced by today's workforce (Baruch 2004; Marshall & Bonner 2003; Schreuder & Coetzee 2011; Sinclair 2009). Researchers have noted that the complexities of the increasingly turbulent career context have significantly impacted people's career attitudes and affective experiences of their working lives (Arnold & Cohen 2008; Barnett & Bradley 2007; Baruch 2004; Duys, Ward, Maxwell & Eaton-Comerford 2008; Kidd 2007). Some of these attitudes and experiences relate to less positive work experiences resulting from more frequent career transitions, a sense of instability and dissatisfying and insecure working conditions. In response to the more turbulent and uncertain career context, people also seem to adopt a more proactive stance toward their careers by taking personal ownership for their career development and focusing on their subjective experiences of career success and continued employability.

Individuals' employability provides them with an inner sense of stability and security (Schreuder & Coetzee 2011) and relates to their ability to achieve sustainable employment and move self-sufficiently within an uncertain and unpredictable labour market (Hillage & Pollard 1998). Employability is regarded as a form of functional flexibility (Van der Heijden 2002) or career resiliency (Schreuder & Coetzee 2011) and reflects individuals' self-efficacious beliefs about the possibilities of their getting and maintaining employment even in the face of uncertain work circumstances (Berntson, Näswall & Sverke 2008). Employability presupposes proactive career behaviours and abilities that help people to fulfil, acquire or create work through the optimal use of both occupation-related and career meta-competencies (Schreuder & Coetzee 2011). Career meta-competencies include awareness of the motives and values (or career anchors) that drive one's career decisions and experiences of career satisfaction, behavioural adaptability and emotional literacy in dealing with setbacks and failures (Coetzee 2008; Coetzee & Bergh 2009). As a career meta-competency, research increasingly recognises emotional intelligence as an important attribute of people's employability and career decision-making (Brown, George-Curran & Smith 2003; Coetzee & Beukes 2010; Pool & Sewell 2007; Yorke & Knight 2004).

Emotional intelligence positively relates to less dysfunctional career thinking, greater career decision-making self-efficacy, a higher level of willingness to explore a variety of career preferences, and to commit to attractive career options (Puffer 2011). People's emotional intelligence is also positively associated with important employment experiences and their emotional attachment to their current careers and jobs (Carson & Carson 1998). However, although the research literature provides

evidence of the relationship between people's emotional intelligence and their employability (Coetzee & Beukes 2010), there seems to be a paucity of research regarding the relationship between people's emotional intelligence and their career anchors, and how their career anchors relate to their employability satisfaction. People's career anchors influence their career choices, life satisfaction, and job and career satisfaction (Coetzee, Bergh & Schreuder 2010). Career anchors are regarded as an important aspect of individuals' career self-concept, which provides clarity of career values, motives, interests and needs. Awareness of one's career anchors and how these influence one's job and career satisfaction have been related to positive career choice outcomes (Schein 1990).

In the light of the research literature indicating how people's employability, emotional intelligence and career anchors influence their subjective career experiences, life satisfaction, and job and career satisfaction, it seems important to explore the relationship between these three variables in the contemporary career context. People's job and career satisfaction is increasingly recognised by organisations as important in retaining valuable and talented staff (Lumley 2010).

## Research objective

The objective of this study was to determine the relation between career anchors, emotional intelligence and employability satisfaction. Should the results reveal significant relationships between the variables, the study may potentially contribute to the advancement of organisational career development practices aimed at enhancing employees' subjective work experiences, and job and career satisfaction. Individuals' job and career satisfaction has been shown to influence their organisational commitment, turnover intentions, motivation and productivity (João 2011; Lumley 2010; Ng & Feldman 2010).

Each of the three variables – career anchors, emotional intelligence and employability satisfaction – will be further explored in the literature review that follows.

## Career anchors

The concept of career anchors offers valuable insights in understanding diversity in career preferences and contemporary career patterns (Rodrigues & Guest 2010). Schein (1978) regards career anchors as a pattern of self-perceived talents and abilities, basic personal values and an evolved sense of motives and needs (as they pertain to the career) that influence a person's career-related decisions. These self-

perceived talents and abilities, values, motives and needs represent the person's career identity or self-concept (Schein 1978, 1990, 1996). A person's dominant career anchor reflects a major career-related concern that forms an integral part of his or her basic self-concept. This concern becomes an overriding issue at every stage of the person's career and serves as an internal driving force when making career decisions (Schein 1990).

Research by Schein (1978, 1990, 1996) suggests that most people's career self-concepts (self-perceived talents and abilities, motives and values) are grounded in eight career anchors (summarised in Table 1). Feldman and Bolino (1996) reconceptualised Schein's eight career anchors into three distinct groupings along with their inherent motivations. These motivations are described as being talents-based, needs-based and values-based anchors. The *talents-based* anchors consist of managerial competence (willingness to solve complex, whole-of-organisation problems and undertake subsequent decision-making), technical/functional competence (the achievement of expert status among peers) and entrepreneurial creativity (opportunity for creativity and identification of new businesses, products or services). The *needs-based* anchors consist of security and stability (long-term employment for health benefits and retirement options), autonomy and independence (personal freedom in job content and settings) and lifestyle motivations (balancing one's personal and the family's welfare with work commitments). The *values-based* anchors consist of pure challenge (testing personal endurance through risky projects or physically challenging work) and service and dedication to a cause (working for the greater good of organisations or communities). Table 1 provides a brief overview of the core goals, desires and values underlying each of the eight career anchors (Coetzee 2011). The goals, desires and values underlying people's career anchors influence their career choices and decisions, and their job and career satisfaction (Lumley 2010). Research indicates that people generally strive for congruence between their career anchors and the work environment in which they pursue their career anchors (Schein 1990).

Empirical evidence suggests that when individuals achieve congruence between their career anchors and their work environment, they are more likely to achieve positive career outcomes (Feldman & Bolino 1996, 2000). Research also indicates individuals' need for congruence between their work and personal interests, as well as the shift of individual preferences towards career anchors that are focused on the pursuit of personal interests along with meaningful work (Coetzee & Schreuder 2008). However, research evidence also suggests that people can have primary and secondary career anchors (Rodrigues & Guest 2010). People with a dominant priority at work are able to make unambiguous career decisions, exercise more control over their job placement and have more positive career outcomes (Feldman & Bolino

1996; Rodrigues & Guest 2010). According to Rodrigues and Guest (2010), people with a wider portfolio of career values and goals may be better equipped to thrive in the contemporary landscape. Holding multiple occupational identities may lead to enhanced feelings of psychological well-being (Rodrigues & Guest 2010) and enable people to adapt more successfully to a changing work environment (Stets & Burke 2000).

According to Schein (1990), people's career anchors tend to develop over time, and individuals generally discover their dominant career anchors when they start to stabilise in their careers or jobs – usually at the age of 30. Considering that the career self-concept continuously evolves on the basis of the insight gained through knowledge and experience (Schein 2006; Super 1990), research evidence suggests that career anchors are potentially flexible and adaptable to people's work and life circumstances. Some people seek to redefine their career priorities when they have met their most important career goals (Rodrigues & Guest 2010). Coetzee et al. (2010) also found that people's career anchors significantly predict their job and career satisfaction, overall life satisfaction and the meaning they attach to work.

## Emotional intelligence

As previously stated, emotional intelligence positively relates to less dysfunctional career thinking, greater career decision-making self-efficacy and a higher level of willingness to explore a variety of career preferences and to commit to attractive career options (Puffer 2011). Salovey and Mayer's (1990) original model of emotional intelligence is relevant to the present study. According to these authors, emotional intelligence subsumes Gardner's (1983) interpersonal intelligence (the ability to understand other people and what motivates them) and intrapersonal intelligence (the capacity to form an accurate model and understanding of oneself and to use the model to operate effectively in life). Based on the assumption that emotional intelligence is a sub-aspect of social intelligence, Salovey and Mayer's (1990) 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).

Table 1: Core goals and concerns, desires and values underlying Schein's (1990) career anchors

<i>Schein's career anchors</i>			<b>Core value</b>
<b>Construct</b>	<b>Core goal/ career concerns</b>	<b>Core desire from workplace</b>	
<i>Talents-based career anchors</i>			
Technical/ functional competence	To exercise talent and develop knowledge of one's expertise	Challenging work that tests one's talents, abilities and skills	Specialisation Further learning and development in one's speciality
General managerial competence	To rise to organisational levels where one is responsible for major policy decisions and where one's own efforts will make the difference between success and failure	High level of responsibility; challenging, varied and integrative work; opportunities for leadership, contributing to the success of the organisation	Power and influence; advancement up the corporate ladder
Entrepreneurial creativity	To create new businesses of one's own; to develop new products or services; to build new organisations	Challenging opportunities to create own enterprises; create or invent new products or services	Power and freedom to create wealth High personal visibility and public recognition
<i>Needs-based career anchors</i>			
Autonomy/ independence	To do things in one's own way, at one's own pace, against one's own standards and on one's own terms	Clearly delineated, time-bound kinds of work within own area of expertise, which allow one to accomplish tasks/goals on one's own terms, in one's own way	Freedom to achieve and demonstrate one's competence
Security/stability	To feel safe and secure	Job tenure and job security; retirement plan and benefits; rewarding steady, predictable performance	Predictability and being rewarded for length of service
Lifestyle	To integrate one's work/ career with one's personal and family needs (balancing a total lifestyle/e)	Respect for personal and family concerns and openness to renegotiate the psychological contract in line with changing lifestyle needs	Flexibility and freedom to balance work-family life
<i>Values-based career anchors</i>			
Service/ dedication to a cause	To improve the world or society in some fashion; to serve humanity and one's nation	Opportunities to influence the employing organisation or social policies in the direction of one's personal values; serving a higher purpose in line with one's personal values	Influence and freedom to operate autonomously in the pursuit of one's personal values or higher life purpose/goal
Pure challenge	To overcome impossible obstacles; to solve unsolvable problems, or to win out over extremely tough opponents	Tasks or situations that provide a constant variety of challenging opportunities for self-tests	Power and influence to be competitive and win

Source: Coetzee (2011)

According to Salovey and Mayer (1990), people differ in the degree to which they display their emotional intelligence. Individuals who appraise and express (perceive and respond to) their emotions accurately are likely to be better understood by the people with whom they interact. They also have the potential to better influence people when they are able to perceive the emotions of the people with whom they interact, as well as to develop empathy (the ability to comprehend another's feelings and re-experience them oneself).

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 is generally regarded as a factor with the potential to contribute to more positive attitudes, behaviours and outcomes (Carmeli 2003) and has been related to career success (Cooper 1997; Goleman 1998). Researchers and career counsellors also increasingly recognise the significance of emotional intelligence in career success, career satisfaction and well-being (Kidd 2008; Pool & Sewell 2007; Sinclair 2009). Jaeger (2003) and Pool and Sewell (2007) further regard the development of emotional intelligence as desirable for enhancing individuals' employability.

## Employability satisfaction

The concept of employability has emerged as a key contributor to career success and satisfaction in an increasingly globally unstable and chaotic business environment (Coetzee & Beukes 2010). Tomlinson (2007) regards individuals' employability to be values- and identity-driven, relating to their own dispositions and biographies. McArdle, Waters, Briscoe and Hall (2007) view career identity and adaptability as key aspects of individuals' employability.

In the context of the present study, employability satisfaction is defined as the self-perceived level of satisfaction that individuals have in terms of their beliefs that they have the attributes, skills, knowledge, experience and occupational expertise to create or attract employment with ease (Schreuder & Coetzee 2011). Employability satisfaction represents individuals' self-efficacious beliefs about their capabilities of securing employment. Bandura (1997) and Van der Velde and Van den Berg (2003) suggest that employability is largely dependent on self-efficacy, which in turn has been shown to be positively related to job search behaviour and positive employment outcomes (Kanfer, Wanberg & Kantrowitz 2001). Coetzee and Beukes (2010) found that individuals who are able to manage and utilise their own emotions are more likely to report greater confidence in their ability to achieve their career goals and succeed in the business world.

## Career anchors, emotional intelligence and employability satisfaction

The preceding literature review provides research evidence of the relationship between employability and emotional intelligence (Coetzee & Beukes 2010). However, there seems to be a paucity of literature regarding the relationship between career anchors and emotional intelligence, and employability satisfaction respectively. Research indicated that individuals' employability is driven by their values and identity, and their ability to adapt to changing circumstances (McArdle et al. 2007; Tomlinson 2007). Considering that both career anchors and emotional intelligence are regarded as important career meta-competencies that drive people's career decisions and experiences of career satisfaction (Coetzee 2008), it is hypothesised that these two variables may be significantly related to employability satisfaction. This leads to the following research hypothesis:

H1: There is a statistically significant relationship between individuals' career anchors, emotional intelligence and employability satisfaction.

The next section discusses the research approach and method that were followed to test the research hypothesis.

## Research design

### Research approach

A quantitative survey design using primary data was used to fulfil the research objective. Although time consuming and sometimes costly, using primary data allows for the collection of data from the original source. A quantitative approach allowed for the conceptualisation of constructs in accordance with specific measuring instruments and the utilisation of such instruments in the measurement of the constructs in a controlled and systematic manner. Another reason for the approach was that it adds to the reliability of the study, as a quantitative design follows a fixed procedure and can therefore be replicated (Mouton & Marais 1996).

### Participants

The participants were a convenience sample of distance learning students ( $n = 270$ ) who were registered for undergraduate studies in the economic and management sciences fields at a South African higher education open distance-learning institution



for a particular year. The sample comprised 74% females and 26% males. Blacks represented 71% (Africans 55%, Coloureds 7%, and Indians 9%) and whites 29% of the sample. The sample represented single (66%) and married (34%) participants in the early adulthood life stage (25–40 years) (86%). The mean age of participants was 32, which implies well-established internal career preferences and values (Schein 1996).

The sample predominantly represented students who were employed full time in the service industry. The participants occupied managerial level (40%) and staff level (60%) positions with occupational expertise predominantly in the financial (21%), education (11%), human resource management (9%), protective services (9%) and health-care (8%) fields.

## Measuring instruments

The Career Orientations Inventory (COI) (Schein 2006) was used to measure the career anchors of the participants. The COI is an established instrument that has been used to measure career anchors both internationally and in South Africa. The COI is a self-report measure that contains 40 items. Responses are captured on a six-point Likert scale. The COI has evidenced good psychometric validity and reliability in other South African multicultural samples (Coetzee & De Villiers 2010; Coetzee & Schreuder 2008, 2009; Coetzee, Schreuder & Tladinyane 2007; Ellison & Schreuder 2000; Van Vuuren & Fourie 2000). High Cronbach's alpha coefficients were obtained for the present study: technical/functional (0.77), general management (0.79), autonomy (0.80), security/stability (0.81), entrepreneurial creativity (0.78), service/dedication to a cause (0.78), pure challenge (0.77) and lifestyle (0.78).

The Assessing Emotions Scale (AES) (Schutte, Malouff & Bullar 2007) is a 33-item self-report inventory that 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, Chan & Caputi 2000; Saklofske, Austin & Minski 2003). In terms of reliability (internal consistency), high Cronbach's alpha coefficients were obtained for the present study: perceiving emotion (0.83), managing own emotions (0.79), managing others' emotions (0.76) and understanding emotions (0.84). 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.

The biographical questionnaire contained an additional item that measured participants' perceptions of their level of *employability satisfaction* on a four-point Likert-type scale, ranging from very dissatisfied to highly satisfied.

## 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. Questionnaires were mailed to the total population of 3 000 students who were registered at the higher education institution for the particular year, yielding a response rate of 9% ( $n = 270$ ). The postal facilities of the institution were used to mail these questionnaires. Each questionnaire included a covering letter to obtain informed consent from the participants to use their responses for research purposes only. The covering letter explained the purpose of the research, procedure, potential benefits, confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation and withdrawal. Participants were requested to complete the questionnaires and return them by mail to the researcher using an enclosed return envelope.

## Statistical analyses

The Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS 2008) was used to analyse the data. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were used to assess the internal consistency of the measuring instruments. Descriptive statistics were performed. Standard multiple regression analyses were conducted to identify the independent variables that provide the best explanation for the proportion of the total variance in the scores of the dependent variables. Since a number of independent variables had to be considered, the value of adjusted  $R^2$  was used to interpret the results. The  $F$ -test was used to test whether there was a significant regression between the independent and the dependent variables. In order to counter the probability of a type 1 error, the significance value was set at the 95% confidence interval level ( $p \leq 0.05$ ). For the purposes of this study,  $R^2$  values of  $\leq 0.12$  (small practical effect) and  $\geq 0.13 \leq 0.25$  (medium practical effect) ( $Fp \leq 0.05$ ) (Cohen 1992) were also considered in the interpretation of the results.

## Research results

### Descriptive statistics

#### *Career anchors profile*

Table 2 shows that security/stability ( $M = 22.88$ ;  $SD = 4.01$ ), service/dedication to a cause ( $M = 22.00$ ;  $SD = 4.22$ ) and lifestyle ( $M = 21.59$ ;  $SD = 5.03$ ) are the three dominant career anchors of the participants. These career orientations are needs-based (security/stability and lifestyle) and values-based (service/dedication to a cause).

#### *Emotional intelligence profile*

Table 2 shows that the participants obtained the highest scores on the managing own emotions ( $M = 38.14$ ;  $SD = 5.42$ ), perceiving emotions ( $M = 34.86$ ;  $SD = 6.26$ ), and managing others' emotions ( $M = 32.91$ ;  $SD = 4.71$ ) variables. These three emotional intelligence variables point to the ability to monitor and regulate one's own or personal emotional landscape (Salovey & Mayer 1990).

**Table 2:** Means, standard deviations and Cronbach's alpha coefficients ( $n = 270$ )

Variable	Mean	SD	Cronbach's alpha coefficient
<b>Career Orientations Inventory (scale overall)</b>			<b>0.81</b>
Technical/functional	20.04	4.26	0.77
General management	17.42	4.04	0.79
Autonomy	18.88	5.24	0.80
Security/stability	22.88	4.01	0.81
Entrepreneurial creativity	19.37	5.87	0.78
Service/dedication to a cause	22.00	4.22	0.78
Pure challenge	20.87	4.47	0.77
Lifestyle	21.59	5.03	0.78
<b>Assessing Emotions Scale (scale overall)</b>			<b>0.85</b>
Perceiving emotions	34.86	6.26	0.83
Managing own emotions	38.14	5.42	0.79
Managing others' emotions	32.91	4.71	0.76
Understanding emotions	24.50	3.78	0.84

### *Employability satisfaction profile*

The participants were mostly satisfied with their level of employability, with 52% indicating they were satisfied, and 29% indicating that they were highly satisfied (total satisfaction 81%). Only 2% indicated that they were highly dissatisfied and 17% indicated that they were dissatisfied.

### Multiple regression analyses

In terms of the COI and AES variables, statistically significant regression models explaining 4% to 12% of the variance in the AES variables were produced. Table 3 shows that the regression models explained small ( $R^2 \leq 0.12$ ;  $p \leq 0.001$ ) practical effect percentages of variance in the AES as dependent variables. Table 3 shows that the entrepreneurial creativity career anchor contributes significantly and negatively to the variance in the perceiving emotions variable ( $\beta = -0.17$ ;  $p \leq 0.02$ ), while the service/dedication to a cause variable contributes significantly and positively to the variance in the perceiving emotions ( $\beta = 0.17$ ;  $p \leq 0.03$ ), managing own emotions ( $\beta = 0.13$ ;  $p \leq 0.10$ ), managing others' emotions ( $\beta = 0.25$ ;  $p \leq 0.001$ ), and understanding emotions ( $\beta = 0.16$ ;  $p \leq 0.04$ ) variables. The autonomy career anchor contributes significantly and negatively to the variance in the managing others' emotions variable ( $\beta = -0.17$ ;  $p \leq 0.02$ ).

Table 4 shows that while the career anchor regression models explained small ( $R^2 = 5\%$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ) practical effect percentages of variance in the employability satisfaction variable, the AES regression model explained a medium ( $R^2 = 15\%$ ;  $p \leq 0.001$ ) practical effect percentage of variance in the employability satisfaction variable.

Table 4 shows that the employability satisfaction variable contributes significantly and positively to the variance in the pure challenge ( $\beta = 0.19$ ;  $p \leq 0.00$ ) and service/dedication to a cause ( $\beta = 0.15$ ;  $p \leq 0.03$ ) career anchors. The AES managing others' emotions variable contributes significantly and negatively to the variance in the employability satisfaction variable ( $\beta = -0.25$ ;  $p \leq 0.05$ ).

Based on the results, the research hypothesis is accepted (H1: There is a statistically significant relationship between individuals' career anchors, emotional intelligence and employability satisfaction).

### Discussion

Overall, the biographical profile of the participants indicated that they were mostly represented by blacks and females specialising in the economic and management

**Table 3:** Significant multiple regression analyses: career anchors (COI) on emotional intelligence (AES) (*n* = 270)

Variable	Un-standardised coefficient		Standardised coefficient	t	p	F	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	R
	b	SE b						
Perceiving emotions (Constant)	28.50	2.39	β	11.93	0.000	2.50**	0.04+***	0.27***
Entrepreneurial creativity	-0.18	0.08	-0.17	-2.39	0.02			
Service/dedication to a cause	0.20	0.09	0.17	2.20	0.03			
Managing own emotions (Constant)	30.40	2.05	β	14.81	0.00	2.89***	0.08+***	0.29***
Service/dedication to a cause	0.14	0.08	0.13	1.75	0.08			
Managing others' emotions (Constant)	26.41	1.75	β	15.12	0.00	4.53***	0.12+***	0.35***
Autonomy	-0.16	0.07	-0.17	-2.32	0.02			
Service/dedication to a cause	0.23	0.07	0.25	3.38	0.001			
Understanding emotions (Constant)	18.24	1.42	β	12.85	0.00	3.63***	0.10+***	0.32***
Service/dedication to a cause	0.11	0.05	0.16	2.09	0.04			

\*  $p \leq 0.05$  +  $R^2 \leq 0.12$  (small practical effect size) ++  $R^2 \geq 0.13 \leq 0.25$  (medium practical effect size)  
 \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$   
 \*\*\*  $p \leq 0.001$

**Table 4:** Significant multiple regression analyses: employability satisfaction on career anchors (COI) and emotional intelligence (AES) on employability satisfaction ( $n = 270$ )

Variable	Standardised coefficient		df	p	F	Adjusted $R^2$	R
Pure challenge	$\beta$	$SE\beta$		0.01	2.38 **	0.05+ **	0.09 **
Employability satisfaction	0.19	0.06	2	0.00	11.80		
Service/ dedication to a cause				0.01	2.62 **	0.05+ **	0.28 **
Employability satisfaction	0.15	0.06	2	0.03	6.13		
Employability satisfaction				0.00	4.53 ***	0.15++ ***	0.23 ***
Managing others' emotions	-0.25	0.13	1	0.05	3.53		

\*  $p \leq 0.05 + R^2 \leq 0.12$  (small practical effect size) ++  $R^2 \geq 0.13 \leq 0.25$  (medium practical effect size)

\*\*  $p \leq 0.01$

\*\*\*  $p \leq 0.001$

sciences, employed in the service industry, and in the establishment phase of their careers. The establishment phase of adult career development is the phase in which the person finds his or her occupational niche and has become part of the work organisation and larger community (Schreuder & Coetzee 2011). In terms of the participants' dominant career anchors profile, the mean scores indicated the security/stability (needs-based), service/dedication to a cause (values-based) and lifestyle (needs-based) career anchors to be the dominant career-related concerns that guide and constrain the participants' career choices and decisions. The participants' work context (that is, the service industry) and life stage career development orientation may explain the preferences for the security/stability and service/dedication to a cause career anchors. The overall career anchors profile seems to corroborate research by O'Neill and Bilmoria (2005), which found women in their 20s and early 30s to be in a phase of idealistic achievement that emphasises concerns about personal control, career satisfaction, achievement and having a positive impact on others.

Considering that the participants were predominantly employed in the service industry, these findings seem to make sense. According to Schein (1990), people with security/stability as a dominant career concern tend to be attracted to government- and civil service-type of jobs. These findings are also in line with research conducted by Coetzee and Schreuder (2008), which found women employed in the service industry to be mostly concerned with steady and stable employment opportunities due to their overriding concerns about raising and educating a family, and having employment that offers financial security in the form of benefit packages. Moreover, in line with the findings of the present study, Coetzee and Schreuder's (2008) study also found that women tend to value work situations that permit them to balance and integrate their personal needs, their family needs and the requirements of their career, as expressed by the lifestyle career anchor. Individuals' whose identity is tied up with the lifestyle career anchor are concerned about their total lifestyle, where they settle, how they deal with their family situation and how they develop themselves (Schein 1990). The significant relationship between the service/dedication to a cause career anchor and employability satisfaction also indicates a high degree of congruence between the participants' service-oriented values and their beliefs in securing employment in the service industry. Similarly, the significant relationship between the service/dedication to a cause career anchor, emotional intelligence (especially the ability to manage others' emotions) and employability satisfaction suggests the ability to positively relate to others and derive satisfaction from serving other people. Tan and Quek (2001) also found a significant strong relationship between people's intrinsic satisfaction and service-oriented values.

In terms of the participants' employability satisfaction and its relation to their dominant career anchors, only the pure challenge and service/dedication to a cause career anchors related significantly to the participants' beliefs that they have the attributes, skills, knowledge, experience and occupational expertise to create or attract employment with ease. The technical/functional and pure challenge career anchors are concerned with challenging opportunities to use, develop and demonstrate one's talents, abilities and skills related to employability. Similarly, the career concerns of the service/dedication to a cause career anchor relate to opportunities to influence the employing organisation or social policies in the direction of one's personal values, which also involves demonstrating skills and abilities in achieving one's goals (Schein 1990). These findings are in agreement with the view of Berntson et al. (2008) that high levels of employability strengthen individuals' efficacy beliefs, and reflect individuals' ability to solve specific work-related problems and handle difficult situations.

The participants' further seem to feel confident about their ability to perceive, monitor and regulate their own emotions. It appears from the findings that the underlying career concerns of the service/dedication to a cause career anchor have significantly increased the participants' confidence in their emotional intelligence abilities. The participants' employability satisfaction seemed to have significantly increased their desire for opportunities to pursue their personal values by serving a higher purpose and contributing to society as a whole. Moreover, the participants' employability satisfaction seems to be significantly related to the participants' emotional intelligence, and negatively influenced by their ability to manage others' emotions in particular. This finding suggests that a lack of confidence in one's ability to manage others' emotions decreases one's confidence in one's capability of securing employment. Emotional intelligence has been found to significantly increase individuals' confidence in their problem-solving abilities (Goleman 1998). 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. Brown et al. (2003) further found that greater confidence in one's ability to complete career-related tasks successfully (that is, one's sense of self-efficacy) is associated with an increased ability to perceive emotions, to use emotions to assist in thought, to understand emotions, and to regulate emotions in the self and others. A high level of emotional intelligence has been found to promote emotional and intellectual growth, and the belief in one's employability (Coetzee & Beukes 2010).

The high need for challenging opportunities to create one's own enterprises, and having the power and freedom to create wealth, appear to have significantly lowered the participants' ability to perceive their own and others' emotions. A high need for the freedom to achieve and demonstrate one's competence in an autonomous manner appears to have negatively influenced the participants' ability to manage others' emotions. Coetzee et al. (2010) found entrepreneurial career motives to be a negative predictor of job/career satisfaction, and to show a negative association with the ability to adapt to changing situations and the ability to deal with setbacks and failures. The participants who embraced the values and motives of the pure challenge career anchor appeared to have significantly higher levels of employability satisfaction. Individuals who embrace the pure challenge career anchor tend to have a strong desire to be exposed to challenging opportunities to solve problems, win out over extremely tough opponents and overcome impossible obstacles (Schein 1990). Coetzee and Beukes (2010) found in this regard that higher levels of the emotional intelligence trait (especially managing one's own emotions) lead to greater confidence in displaying employability-related skills and behaviour.



## Limitations and recommendations

Since the present study was limited to a sample of predominantly black and female undergraduate higher education distance-learning students predominantly employed in the South African service industry, the findings cannot be generalised to other occupational, race, gender and industry 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 need to be replicated with broader samples across various occupational, race and gender groups, and economic sectors before final conclusions can be drawn about the relation between individuals' career anchors, emotional intelligence, and employability satisfaction.

Considering that people's career self-concepts evolve and change as they encounter new situations or transitions in their lives, and that these influence their emotional intelligence and employability beliefs, it may be useful to conduct a longitudinal study to deepen one's understanding of the relationship between people's career anchors, emotional intelligence and employability satisfaction over the life course of the individual.

## Conclusions and implications for practice

The value of the findings obtained in the present study lies in the explanatory utility of the identified relation between the three variables of concern to this study. Overall, it can be concluded that the values and motives underlying the participants' career anchors act as psychological forces that give impetus to their emotional intelligence, leading to higher levels of employability satisfaction. The constructs studied in the present study seem to provide a useful theoretical framework for increasing employees' self-awareness, helping them to expand their perspective on their career development options, and find greater fulfilment and meaning in managing their career development. In more practical terms, organisations should realise that the fit between employees' internal values, their emotional intelligence and the work environment is the key to their employability satisfaction. Organisations should also take cognisance of the participants' need for security and stability, and its relation to their employability satisfaction and the ability to manage others' emotions in the service industry. Organisational career systems should be clear about future career prospects by supporting employees in engaging in realistic career development planning, and further education and training opportunities. Research provides evidence that job security is characterised by a sense of stability about one's job

continuity and significantly influences feelings of self-worth, psychological career success (Nabi 2003) and overall career well-being (Kidd 2008).

The findings contribute new knowledge to the field of career psychology and may be used to inform human resource practices concerned with optimising person–job fit and the employability, job and career satisfaction of employees. In the light of the turbulent world of work context, career counsellors may also find the results useful in facilitating proactive career behaviour among employees.

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## Relation between career anchors, emotional intelligence and employability satisfaction

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## Relation between career anchors, emotional intelligence and employability satisfaction

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