

**FACTORS INFLUENCING WORK READINESS OF GRADUATES: AN EXPLORATORY
STUDY**

BY

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

The world of work is increasingly changing, and to keep up with the changes, organisations are recruiting recent graduates with the aim of facilitating growth and continual improvement. The challenge is that these graduates do not necessarily possess the kind of competencies required to survive in the work environment. There are many challenges in the work environment that can affect the performance of graduates, and this requires certain competencies which graduates rarely possess. On the basis of the literature overview it is proposed that EI, SOC and PsyCap could contribute to strengthening graduates' personal resources and contribute to their work readiness and ultimately their performance in the work environment.

The aim of this study was to explore the relationships between emotional intelligence (EI), psychological capital (PsyCap), sense of coherence (SOC) and the work readiness (WR) of graduates. The main argument of this study was that the personal resources of EI, SOC and PsyCap may make meaningful contributions to the work readiness of graduates and subsequently their performance in the work environment. The existence of relationships between these variables was statistically investigated and the necessary conclusions were drawn.

A sample of 183 participants was drawn from two universities in Africa. Participants completed existing reliable and valid instruments measuring EI, SOC and PsyCap. WR was measured using the recently developed WRS. Correlational analysis was undertaken to determine the relationships between EI, SOC, PsyCap and WR. Multiple regression analysis was undertaken to determine whether the independent variables (EI, SOC and PsyCap) contribute to WR.

Results revealed significant positive relationships between several subscales of EI, PsyCap and the subscales of WR, more specifically with organisational acumen and work competence. Very low correlations and insignificant correlations were found between SOC and the subscales of WR. The multiple regression analysis revealed comprehensibility as the best predictor for personal work characteristics; emotional reasoning, emotional expression and optimism as best predictors for organisational acumen; efficacy and emotional self management as best predictors for work competence and efficacy as the best predictor for social intelligence. The conclusion that was drawn from this study was that EI and PsyCap contribute to WR, more specifically to organisational acumen and work competence.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

Global events, such as the recession in 2007 that devastated economies around the world, continue to affect the world of business today (Caballero & Walker, 2010). These changes in the global business sphere demand that businesses constantly adapt and seek innovative ways of doing business in order to stay relevant. In responding to the challenges posed, organisations have come to realise the significance of investing in their most important asset, the employee. According to Brocaglia (2006), organisations have welcomed the idea of putting more emphasis on attracting, developing and retaining talent within the organisation as a means of keeping up with the global economy.

There are many techniques employed in the business of talent acquisition and retention. One such method involves the hiring of recent graduates with academic, technical and social skills required to meet the unique demands of the organisation's industry (Pop & Barkhuizen, 2010; Zinser, 2003). This is also commonly referred to as 'headhunting' or 'talent scouting'. According to this practice, representatives from different organisations would visit universities and approach students with potential and outstanding academic records and offer them contractual employment upon completion of their studies. Many organisations engage in this practice due to the general expectation of the graduate's ability to add immediate value to the organisation (Jackson, 2009; McDermott, 2007) and also to facilitate growth and continual improvement in performance through innovation (Luscombe, Lewis, & Biggs, 2013). It is also for these reasons that employers expect entry-level graduates to be 'work ready' (Archer & Davison, 2008; Lowden, Hall, Elliot, & Lewin, 2011; Oliver, 2013; Zwane, Du Plessis, & Slabbert, 2014). What it means to be work ready, however, is not clear because of the lack of consensus in literature.

The use of different terminologies (e.g. *workforce readiness*, *work preparedness*, *graduateness* and *graduate employability*) to refer to the extent to which graduates are considered ready for work (Atlay & Harris, 2000; Casner-Lotto, & Barrington, 2006; Gardner & Lui, 1997; Hart, 2008) is one of the reasons why it is difficult to have a common understanding of what it means to be 'work ready'. Caballero and Walker (2010, p. 17) define work readiness (WR) as "the extent to which graduates are perceived to possess the attitudes and attributes that make them prepared or ready for success in the work environment".

Work readiness and the issues surrounding defining the term are further discussed in Chapter 2 (see par 2.4). Despite the challenges in defining work readiness, organisations are still engaged in the practice of employing recent graduates. There are four underlying reasons for the employment of graduates. According to Harvey (2001), graduates are firstly employed for the knowledge and ideas that they bring to an organisation, and secondly, for their willingness to learn and their speed of learning. The third reason for employing graduates relates to the graduates' flexibility, adaptability and ability to deal with change. Lastly, graduates are employed for their logical, analytical, critical, problem-solving and synthetic skills and the influence they have on innovation. The recruiting of talented graduates is still popular and considered a successful method of talent acquisition by some employers. There is, however, research that indicates that not all employers are entirely happy with the graduates' level of preparedness for the work environment (Boden & Nedeva, 2010).

In a South African study on employability and higher education by Kruss (as cited in Pop & Barkhuizen, 2010), it was established that a mismatch exists between graduates' aspirations and the realities of the labour market. The results of the study indicated that graduates were being perceived by some employers as being insufficiently prepared for the world of work. Research by Mourshed, Farrell, and Barton (n.d.) from Australia also supports this stance. Their results indicate that, while 72% of educational institutions believed that recent graduates were ready for work, only 42% of employers agreed (Mourshed et al.). In another study conducted by the Council of the Built Environment (CBE), in South Africa, initiated to address questions such as whether built environment (BE) graduates lived up to the expectations of industry, the overwhelming view from all organisations involved was that graduates did not live up to the expectations of industry (Vatiswa, 2014). According to this study, on average, it took between three to five years before a BE graduate could confidently be authorised to manage aspects of the workplace on his/her own. An interesting finding from this study was that the possible reason for this lack of preparedness could be traced to the university curriculum or systems that do not provide or which do not sufficiently address soft skills that are essential to be workplace ready (Vatiswa, 2014).

In another study by Archer and Davison (2008) conducted for the Council for Industry and Higher Education (United Kingdom), findings of another study are quoted indicating that almost a third of employers (30%) who were surveyed in that study had problems with graduates' generic employability skills such as team work, communication and problem solving.

Further findings from the study by Archer and Davison (2008) also indicated that employers were disappointed with graduates' attitude towards work (25%), self-management (33%), business awareness (44%) and foreign language skills (49%).

These are just a few studies highlighting the growing concern about the perceived mismatch between industry's needs and demands and the skills of graduates produced by institutions of higher education (Ayarkwa & Adinyira, n.d.). The dissatisfaction of employers with graduates' performance in the workplace, more particularly with graduates' shortcomings in 'soft skills' (such as typing and communication skills) that are deemed vital for successful transition into the workplace, highlights two important issues. Firstly, field-specific knowledge and technical skills on their own are not sufficient to label graduates 'work ready', and secondly, there is a necessity for graduates to develop certain capacities beyond their qualifications that would enable them to deal with the stressful nature of the work environment.

Jorgensen (2004) highlights the important fact that a qualification does not automatically translate into the kind of competencies valued by today's labour markets. This is also evident in the high numbers of unemployed graduates both locally and abroad. In the period between January and March 2012, 4.5 million people in South Africa were unemployed, and 9.5% of those were people with tertiary qualifications (Quarterly Labour Survey [QLS], 2012). This relatively high number of unemployed graduates is evidence that a qualification does not always equal employment. It is therefore clear that, in this highly volatile and competitive labour market, graduates need to acquire skills that would make them more attractive to potential employers.

Harvey et al. (as cited in Falconer & Pettigrew, 2003) are of the opinion that graduates can increase their attractiveness to potential employers by accumulating a portfolio of skills. Such a skills portfolio would include relevant knowledge and skills in a specific field (such as engineering), as well as a set of personal competencies or generic skills (such as communication skills), which are seen as crucial to successful functioning and development at work (Anderson & Marshall as cited in Semeijn, Van der Velden, Heijke, Van der Vleuten, & Boshuizen, 2005). Students getting ready to make the transition from university to the workplace need to equip themselves with these skills and competencies as it will enable them to maximise their chances of employment and a successful career (Maher & Nield, as cited in Smith & Kruger, 2008). According to Falconer and Pettigrew (2003), being equipped with both academic and technical knowledge developed by field specific studies and transferable skills that are required by the organisation contributes to WR.

A great deal of research has been conducted by authors such as Burnett and Jayaram (2012) (in Africa and Asia), Casner-Lotto and Barrington (2006) (in the USA), Griesel and Parker (2009) (in South Africa), Lowden et al. (2011) (in the United Kingdom), and Aggarwal (2013) (in India), with the intention of gaining a better understanding of the type of skills, attributes and other factors that contribute to WR. These authors have produced lists of skills, referred to as *core*, *key* or *generic skills* that they considered as essential aspects of WR, from the perspective of both the employer and the employee.

The current research on the factors that contribute to WR can be divided into two categories. The first category describes these skills as core competencies, or field-specific knowledge and skills that are relevant for the types of jobs for which an educational programme prepares a student (Boshuizen, as cited in Semeijn et al., 2005). The second category describes these skills as generic skills, such as logical and analytical reasoning skills, problem solving, and communication skills (Zhang, Luk, Arthur, & Wong, 2001) that go beyond disciplinary content knowledge, and which are applicable in a range of contexts (Barrie, 2006).

These generic skills are non-technical skills that all graduates require in order to apply their disciplinary knowledge in the workplace and can be understood to be referring to a wide range of qualities and capacities (Hager, Holland, & Beckett, 2002; Jackson & Chapman, 2012). The general opinion is that a combination of field-specific knowledge and generic skills is the core ingredient for success in the work environment (Falconer & Pettigrew, 2003; Jorgensen, 2004; Semeijn et al, 2005; Smith & Kruger, 2008).

There is a developing view in literature that the skills which contribute to WR should not be limited to field-specific knowledge and skills and generic skills such as communication and reasoning skills only, but that they should be extended to include personal attributes or intrapersonal factors, such as personality, integrity, values, dispositions and tolerances amongst others (Caballero & Walker, 2010; Goleman, 1998; Hager et al., 2002; Smith & Kruger, 2008). This is a new and insightful way of thinking about the factors that contribute to WR and which have not received much attention, but which deserve further exploration because of the constantly changing nature of work.

According to Goleman (1998), the rules of work are changing. Employers are no longer only interested in how smart employees are, or in employees' training and expertise, but also in how well employees handle themselves and each other (Archer & Davison, 2008).

Employers' focus on individual abilities is shifting from intellectual abilities and technical knowhow to personal qualities such as initiative, empathy, adaptability and persuasiveness (Goleman, 1998).

This is in line with the notion proposed by Caballero and Walker (2010), Goleman (1998), Hager et al. (2002) and Smith and Kruger (2008) that personal attributes such as personality, integrity, values, dispositions and tolerance may make a meaningful contribution to WR. Personal resources are described as positive self-evaluations that are linked to resiliency, and refer to the individual's sense of ability to control and influence his/her environment successfully (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2009). As such, personal resources are functional in achieving goals, protecting from threats and the associated physiological and psychological costs, and stimulating personal growth and development (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009).

In a study by Oginska-Bulik (2005b), investigating the role of personal and social resources in preventing adverse health outcomes, it was found that subjects with high levels of resources perceived their work environment as less stressful (with respect to factors such as lack of support, work overload, social relationship and lack of control) and showed less mental health disorders such as somatic complaints and anxiety.

In today's work environment, the need to possess certain personal resources is invaluable, more so for recent graduates. Stressors in the work environment are a major challenge for both the individual and the organisation (Oginska-Bulik, 2005b). Workers today are required to perform multiple tasks, maintain good interpersonal relationships, meet high expectations from management, learn new skills to meet competitive demands, being overwhelmed by the challenges of the work itself, all of which lead to the possible experience of stress (Oginska-Bulik, 2005b). This can be overwhelming for recent graduates and can ultimately have a negative effect on the extent to which they are considered 'work ready. According to Oginska-Bulik (2005a), whether a stressor produces an enduring health outcome or not, depends on the extent to which the person perceives the condition as stressful and how they respond to it. Such person's perception and response are affected by a number of modifying variables, mainly personal resources.

Personal resources such as emotional intelligence (EI), sense of coherence (SOC) and psychological capital (PsyCap) have been widely researched (Griffiths, Ryan & Foster, 2011; Luthans, Avolio, Walumba & Li, 2005; Mayer & Salovey, 1997) and established in literature as having a positive influence on the management of stressors and the subsequent improvement of performance of individuals in the workplace (see par 2.8). Despite this, research on how these factors influence the work readiness of graduates has not been carried out.

This lack of research on the relationship between EI, SOC, PsyCap and WR presents as our research initiating question, namely do the factors of EI, SOC and PsyCap influence WR. The main argument of this study was that EI, SOC and PsyCap can be regarded as part of the generic skills that may make meaningful contributions to the WR of graduates.

In the work environment, dealing with other people, be it clients or co-workers, is crucial to the success of the organisation (Labianca & Brass, 2006). Possessing the ability to regulate and manage emotions appropriately is critical to the success of the organisation, because emotions play an important role in the employee's readiness to create and innovate (Fenwick, as cited in Suliman & Al-Shaikh, 2007). The ability to recognise, express and control emotions may also have an influence on perceived job stress and the consequences of experiencing stress (Oginska-Bulik, 2005a). The role of higher education is to produce graduates with a solid foundation in the knowledge and skills they will need to be productive managers and effective leaders and, according to Tucker (as cited in Pool & Sewell, 2007 p. 284), by "implementing EI theory and exercises, faculties will help students become well-rounded graduates". Goleman (1998, p. 4) provides strong support for the inclusion of EI in any model of employability in the following quote:

In a time with no guarantees of job security, when the very concerto of a job is rapidly being replaced by "portable skills", these are prime qualities that make and keep us employable. Talked about loosely for decades under a variety of names, from "character" and "personality" to "soft skills" and "competence", there is at last a more precise understanding of these human qualities, a new name for them, emotional intelligence.

According to Moynagh and Worsley (cited in Pool & Sewell, 2007, p. 283), in "the future knowledge-based economy, EI will become even more important than it currently is, with the predicted expansion of customer-facing jobs in which human interaction plays a central part."

Therefore, in order to achieve true WR, a graduate will need to develop EI competencies (Pool & Sewell, 2007). The inclusion of EI in the development of WR is further supported by the research (Arefnasab, Zare, & Babamahmoodi, 2012; Jaeger, 2003; Lopes et al., 2004) on EI, which indicates its value in the work environment. Graduates with strong EI competencies enjoy more career success, build stronger personal relationships and enjoy better health, and motivate themselves and others to achieve more, than those with low levels of EI (Copper, as cited in Pool & Sewell, 2007). Jaeger (2003) demonstrated that EI can be improved through teaching and learning in a higher education setting and is positively correlated with academic achievement. According to Jaeger (2003), enhancing EI is a desirable outcome for students, employees and employers. Further discussion on EI is provided in Chapter 2 (see par 2.5.1).

Another critical skill to possess in the workplace is the ability to perceive stressors in the work environment as manageable and meaningful (Avey, Luthans, & Jensen, 2009). According to Oginska-Bulik (2005b), a strong SOC leads to assessing the work environment as less stressful and easier to cope with than a weak SOC. A well-developed SOC has the benefit of helping people to perceive situations and social environments and their accompanying demands as less stressful, threatening or anxiety-provoking (Feldt, 2007). A strong SOC can make a meaningful contribution to WR as it will develop graduates who are able to perceive situations in their new environment correctly and respond accordingly to them. Given the unique challenges recent graduates face, which are associated with being in a particular life and career stage (see par 2.5), a strong SOC may be beneficial to recent graduates. Research indicates that those with higher levels of SOC have been found to experience less emotional exhaustion than those with low SOC (Feldt, 2007), experience fewer stress symptoms, less burnout and cope more efficiently with strain in the work environment (Albertsen, Nielsen, & Borg, 2000; Rothmann, Jackson, & Kruger, 2003) than those with low SOC. A strong SOC has also been associated with increased self-efficacy, less learned helplessness, increased hardiness and internal locus of control (Smith & Meyers, as cited in Jellesma, Rieffe, Terwogt, & Westenberg, 2011). A further discussion on SOC is provided in Chapter 2 (see par 2.5.3).

Being able to put in the necessary effort to succeed and to persevere towards goal attainment, even in the face of adversity, can be regarded as important for employees. This is even more important for graduates because of the transition period from university to work. When transitioning to the workplace, graduates may be faced with many challenges that may affect their level of WR negatively.

Strong PsyCap could benefit these graduates by developing their ability to appraise circumstances positively and increase their probability for success (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007).

PsyCap places great emphasis on the positive nature and strengths of employees and the role this has on fuelling employees' growth and performance (Luthans et al., 2005) and assisting in human capital issues (Simons & Buitendach, 2013). In a nutshell, the higher the levels of PsyCap, the more able an employee is to move forward when faced with everyday work hassles (Gooty, Gavin, Johnson, Fraizer & Snow, 2009). Several researchers have linked the psychological dimensions of PsyCap to overall workplace attitudes and performance, extra role behaviours, improved capacity to adjust to new conditions and work cooperation (Avey, Wernsing, & Luthans, 2008; Luthans, Youseff, & Avolio, 2007).

Studies from a positive organisational behaviour perspective have shown that the construct of PsyCap may contribute to a decrease in stress (e.g. Avey et al., 2009) and an increase in the experience of emotions, which in turn is related to an employee's engagement during organisational change (Avey et al., 2008). PsyCap is further discussed in Chapter 2 (see par 2.5.2).

Combined, the personal resources of EI, SOC and PsyCap can work together to make a meaningful contribution to the extent to which a graduate is considered ready for the world of work. Despite the multitudes of benefits of having well-developed EI, SOC and PsyCap, the relationship between these variables and WR has not yet been investigated. Based on research (Avey et al., 2008; Feldt, 2007; Jaeger, 2003; Oginska-Bulik, 2005b; Simons & Buitendach, 2013) that indicates a positive link between EI, SOC, PsyCap and the work environment, investigating how these factors relate to the WR of graduates is a relevant research gap. Gaining a better understanding of the relationship between these factors and WR can be beneficial to both graduates and the higher education institutions that are tasked with providing students with the type of competencies and skills that will assist them in successfully gaining and retaining future employment.

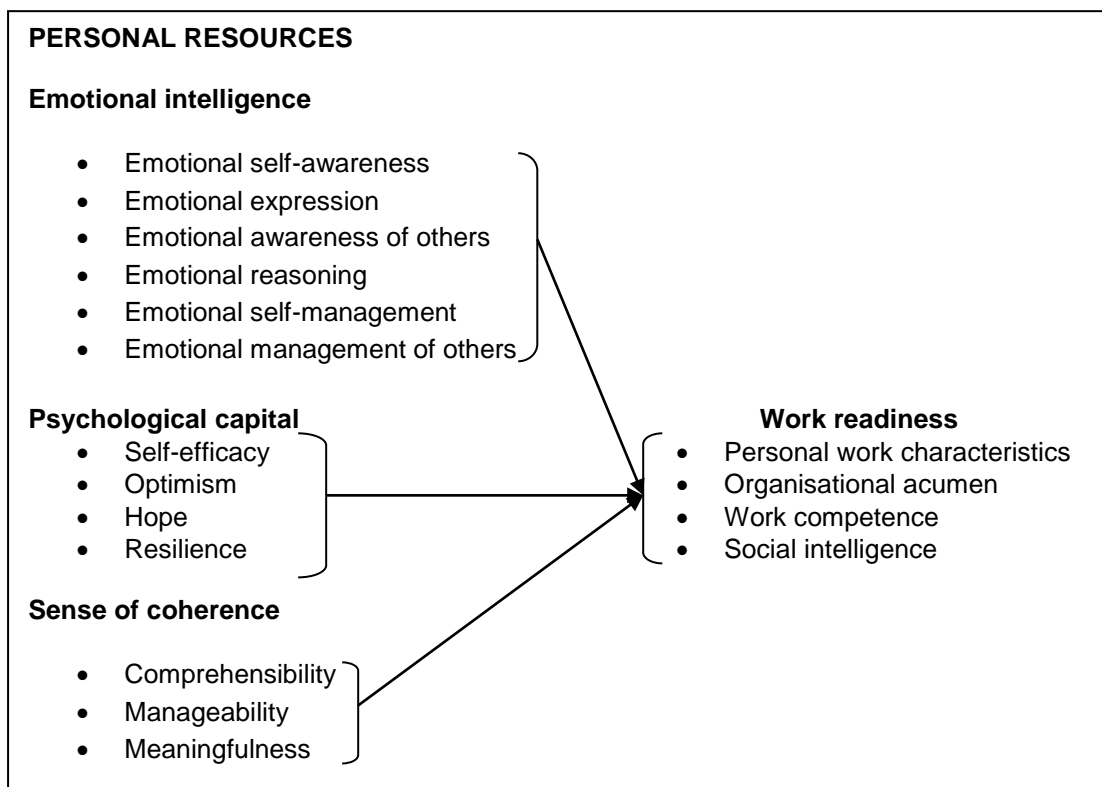


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Model of Emotional Intelligence, Sense of Coherence, Psychological Capital and Work Readiness

Figure 1.1 provides a conceptual model of the proposed relationship between EI, SOC, PsyCap and WR. EI consists of seven items, namely emotional self-awareness, emotional expression, emotional awareness of others, emotional reasoning, emotional self-management and emotional management of others (Gignac, 2008). SOC consists of three items, namely comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness (Antonovsky, 1993). PsyCap consists of four items, namely self-efficacy, optimism, hope and resilience (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, 2007). WR consists of four items, namely personal work characteristics, organisational acumen, work competence and social intelligence (Caballero, Walker, Fuller-Tyszkiewicz, 2011).

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTION

Many organisations have adopted the practice of hiring recent graduates with the aim of increasing innovation and performance in the organisation (Jackson, 2009; McDemott, 2007). The general expectation is that graduates have the ability to add immediate value to the organisation (Luscombe et al., 2013).

However, many employers perceive graduates as not adequately prepared for the work environment (Archer & Davison, 2008; Lowden et al., 2011; Oliver, 2013, Zwane et al., 2013). The general complaint is that graduates lack the necessary 'soft skills' needed to complement their 'hard skills' (such as subject specific knowledge).

Research on the type of 'soft skills' required to be work ready has so far produced outcomes which emphasise skills such communication, problem solving skills, and negotiation skills (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Griesel & Parker; Lowden et al., 2011). Research on the intrapersonal skills such as EI, SOC and PsyCap has been neglected and this presents as a research gap. The lack of research on the relationship between EI, SOC and PsyCap raises questions about the nature of the relationship of the above mentioned variables. This study will attempt to answer the following research questions raised by the gap in literature:

- Are there significant relationships between EI, SOC, PsyCap and WR?
- Do the factors of EI, SOC and PsyCap influence WR?

1.3 RESEARCH AIM

The aim of this study was to make a meaningful contribution to research on the factors that influence WR by investigating whether EI, SOC, and PsyCap influence graduates' WR.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of this research is to investigate the relationships between EI, SOC, PsyCap and WR. The following specific objectives were formulated to guide the study:

- To determine the theoretical relationships between EI, SOC, PsyCap and WR.
- To determine the empirical relationships between EI, SOC, PsyCap and WR in a sample of students from three universities in Africa.

1.5 RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

Although the study is exploratory in nature, it is expected that the findings presented in this study will make meaningful contributions both theoretically and practically.

Theoretically it is expected that this study will contribute to creating awareness on the need for personal resources in improving the work readiness of graduates. Furthermore it is expected that this study will provide new insights about the relationship between EI, SOC, PsyCap and the WR of graduates.

Practically the findings in this study may benefit institutions of higher education. Higher education institutions are tasked with providing industry with graduates that are considered work ready. The findings of positive results in this study may assist in the development of programs aimed at developing the kind of competencies and capacities which have been empirically proven to contribute to the WR of graduates.

1.6 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The research was conducted in six phases, namely the literature review, empirical research, reporting of the results, discussion of the results, limitations and the recommendations of the research.

1.6.1 Chapter 2: Literature review

The focus of the literature review was to outline the factors involved in work readiness of graduates. The literature review focused on understanding the conceptualisation of WR and investigating the relationship between EI, SOC, PsyCap and WR through exploration of relevant literature.

Specific areas of the literature review included:

- The South African graduate context
- Graduates' attributes
- Work readiness
- Personal resources

1.6.2 Chapter 3: Empirical research

The empirical research phase discusses the method of data gathering, the steps that were undertaken to gather the data as well as the instruments that were used to gather data. Data was gathered by means of questionnaires. EI was measured using the Genos EI self-assessment inventory (Gignac, 2008).

PsyCap was measured using the PCQ-24 self-rater inventory (Luthans Avolio et al., 2007). SOC was measured using the Orientation to Life Questionnaire (OLQ-13) inventory (Antonovsky, 1993). WR was measured using the Work Readiness Scale (Caballero et al., 2011). These questionnaires were administered to final-year students from three universities in Africa, with a total sample N=183.

1.6.3 Chapter 4: Reporting of results

This phase focuses on discussing the findings from the statistical analysis process. The discussion of the results will include discussing findings from descriptive statistical analysis, correlations of factors, as well as the results of the multiple regression analysis for the variables under study.

1.6.4 Chapter 5: Discussion of the results

In this phase, the results of the study are discussed. The aim of the discussion phase is to discuss in detail whether the initial hypotheses are supported or rejected, based on the results of the statistical analysis. Findings of the current study will also be compared to those of previous researchers to see whether the results correlate or not. Furthermore, new and interesting findings based on this study and possible reasons for such findings will be discussed.

1.6.5 Chapter 6: Conclusion, limitations and recommendations

In this phase, the conclusions drawn from the study are discussed. Statements about empirical findings of this study are discussed. Supporting evidence is also provided to support the statements made about the findings. The general limitations of the study as well as any limitations pertaining to the research gathering process and instruments will be discussed in this phase.

The last part of the study focuses on practical recommendations based on the findings from the study. Possible recommended intervention strategies and recommendations for possible future research are also discussed.

1.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The world of work is increasingly changing, and to keep up with the changes, organisations are recruiting recent graduates with the aim of facilitating growth and continual improvement. The challenge is that these graduates do not necessarily possess the kind of competencies required to survive in the work environment.

There are many challenges in the work environment that can affect the performance of graduates, and this requires certain competencies which graduates rarely possess. It is therefore proposed that EI, SOC and PsyCap could contribute to strengthen graduates' personal resources and contribute to their work readiness and ultimately their performance in the work environment.

The aim of the study was to investigate the relationships between the personal resources, namely EI, PsyCap and SOC and the WR of graduates. The motivation for this study was discussed in this chapter. The research problem as well as the research objectives and the phases of this study were also discussed. The next chapter will present the literature review where the proposed intrapersonal factors of EI, SOC, PsyCap and WR will be discussed in more detail.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationships between EI, SOC, PsyCap and WR, more specifically to investigate whether EI, SOC and PsyCap influence the WR of graduates. This chapter will attempt to provide theoretical support and justification for the hypothesised relationship between EI, SOC, PsyCap and WR. The chapter begins with a brief discussion on the South African graduate's employment context, with specific focus on the factors that may have a negative influence on the WR levels of graduates. A discussion on graduates' attributes is also presented to introduce the context within which the study was based. WR and personal resources as factors that contribute to WR are also discussed in this chapter.

2.2 THE SOUTH AFRICAN GRADUATE CONTEXT

Before exploring literature on WR and the skills that may influence WR, it is important to explore and gain an understanding of the South African graduate employment context. A brief introduction on the current state of graduates' employment is discussed in the next section. Thereafter the factors that affect the WR of graduates are discussed.

Education in South Africa is in a state of crisis and this is evident, according to Modisaotsile (2012), in the enrolment rates and increasingly poor Grade 12 output. Despite spending a large amount of the annual budget on education, the education system remains largely in a poor state of affairs (Modisaotsile, 2012). The South African Department of Education (DoE, 2012) commissioned a research study during the period 2011/12 on the state of higher education (Mtshali, 2013). According to this survey, there were close to one million students registered at South Africa's public universities. One of the main findings from that study was the low percentage of students who complete their degrees (Mtshali, 2013). The results also indicated low pass rates, with only 15% pass rate for undergraduate students, 20% for master's students, and 12% for doctoral students (Mtshali, 2013). Reasons behind these low rates included external factors such as financial constraints, lack of academic preparedness and a lack of support for students by the university (Mtshali, 2013).

The highest failure rates were experienced in programmes of mathematics and science, including medicine, technology and business studies. Despite challenges in the education system, it seems like those students who go on to graduate are faced with further challenges of obtaining employment. A report in the *City Press* newspaper (16 June 2012), titled “Young, jobless, and desperate: Degrees with no guarantees” claimed that almost 600 000 university graduates were languishing at home and unable to put into practice what they have learned. According to this article, university degrees and diplomas no longer hold the promise of jobs for young South Africans because hundreds and thousands of graduates are battling to find work (“Young, jobless, and desperate: Degrees with no guarantees”, 2012). According to Sharp (as cited in “Young, jobless, and desperate: Degrees with no guarantees”, 2012), university qualifications are not the only qualities employers look for when recruiting.

Unemployment in South Africa has remained exceedingly high by global standards and this contributes to the social tension and anguish experienced on a daily basis, especially amongst the youth (Holmes, 2014). Recent reports on the employment rate in South Africa indicate a decrease in employment over the period of the fourth quarter of 2013 and the first quarter of 2014. This was accompanied by an increase in unemployment, putting the current unemployment rate above 25.2% (QLS, 2014). In the first quarter of 2014, the unemployment rate among young people aged 15–34 years was 36.1%, which is 3.4% higher when compared with the first quarter of 2008 (QLS, 2014). According to Altbeker and Storme (2013), the South African labour market faces critical challenges, such as low participation in the labour force, high unemployment among those who want to work, few employment opportunities in rural areas, and an increasingly skill-intensive economy despite a scarcity of skills and very high levels of inequality. Young people who are employed are more likely to be employed in precarious conditions, for example 20.7% of employed youth are on contracts of a limited duration compared to 10.8% of employed adults (Holmes, 2014). Altbeker and Storme (2013) point to factors such as level of education, employment sectors, race, age and real or perceived quality of degree as likely contributors to graduate unemployment. Although the picture of employment for South African graduates looks bleak, Altbeker and Storme (2013) argue that the issues surrounding graduates and their employment are exaggerated. They argue that, although fewer people with university degrees are unemployed, with numbers just under 5% in 2011; there is still value in obtaining a university qualification (Altbeker & Storme, 2013).

The argument by Altbeker and Storme (2013) raises questions such as, if the university qualification is of such value, why then the dissatisfaction about the level of the graduate preparedness for the work environment? Much has been written in literature regarding graduates' performance in the workplace, with many employers voicing their dissatisfaction about the current state of graduates' preparedness for the work environment (Archer & Davison, 2008; Mourshed et al., n.d.; Vatiswa, 2014). Literature on the reasons why graduates are unsuccessful in the work environment seems to point to their lack of skills, more specifically generic skills that cut across disciplines and which are deemed necessary for success in the workplace (Archer & Davison, 2008; Ayarkwa & Adinyira, n.d.; Mourshed et al., n.d.; Vatiswa, 2014). There are other indicators that point to factors both from the graduate's side and the employer's side that might have an influence on the extent to which graduates are considered ready for work. For example, it has been found that burnout, factors related to the workplace (such as interpersonal relationships), factors related to life cycles and factors related to individual characteristics are all related to the graduate turnover (Suzuki et al., 2006).

In this study, it is argued that certain factors from the employer's side, such as the nature of the work environment, present challenges which may affect the WR of graduates (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2007; Labianca & Brass, 2006; Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). It is further argued that there are factors from the side of the graduate which may negatively affect the extent to which they are considered WR (Graham & McKenzie, 1995; Lenz, 2001; Levinson, 1986; Ryan, 2001). Furthermore, it is argued that possessing the personal resources of EI, SOC and PsyCap may assist graduates to deal with these challenges and ultimately improve their WR. These factors are further discussed in the next section.

2.2.1 Factors affecting work readiness in the work environment

According to a study by Yiu (2013), about half of employers who hired fresh graduates in the three years before the study, have reported turnover rates of more than 50%. Fresh graduates were reported to have stayed with the organisation for a period of between three and twelve months, and the most common reason for leaving included better opportunities, unsuitable job nature and not being satisfied with salary and benefits (Yiu, 2013). Employers' expectations have also been found to affect employees' performance. In the case of graduates, this may have an effect on the extent to which they are considered work ready. According to Schreuder and Coetzee (2007), organisations tend to have several expectations from their new employees, which are not necessarily priorities or characteristics of the new employees.

Such expectations include competence to get the job done, the ability to accept organisational realities, such as office policies etc., the ability to generate and implement ideas, patience and perseverance in wanting acceptance for new ideas, the ability to translate technical solutions into practical terms, the ability to handle interpersonal relations, the loyalty and commitment to the goals and values of the organisation, high personal integrity, the ability to compromise and the capacity to grow and learn from experience (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2007). This may result in expectation gaps. An expectation gap is described as a discrepancy between what a person encounters and what he or she expected to encounter (Sturges & Guest, 2010). One implication of these unmet expectations from the employer's side is the conclusion that, because the particular graduate does not meet the expectations, he/she is therefore not work ready. The findings of a study by Burke (1998) suggest that unmet expectations can undermine one's future performance. The experiences of unmet expectations on the graduate's side are further discussed in par 2.2.2.3.

Employees are embedded in social networks that can provide opportunities and benefits such as job satisfaction and enhanced performance (Labianca & Brass, 2006). However, all relationships have positive and negative aspects (Labianca & Brass, 2006). In working contexts, high-quality relationships are key channels through which members engage in learning behaviours that help the organisation attain its goals (Carmeli, Brueller & Dutton, 2009). Negative encounters, cognitions or behaviours can occur in any relationship, including relationships in the work environment (Labianca & Brass, 2006). Interpersonal conflict is characterised as an enduring, recurring set of negative judgments, feelings and behavioural intentions towards another person (Labianca & Brass, 2006). Toxic work environments, characterised by high levels of interpersonal conflict, are problematic for employees (Chamberlain & Hudson, 2010). This kind of environment may have negative consequences for the performance of graduates. Interpersonal conflicts have long been known to be stressful to workers, more especially when the conflict emerges from people in higher authority (Chamberlain & Hudson, 2010). Graduates are usually placed under supervision for a certain period after joining the organisation. Developing graduates' personal resource of EI may play an instrumental role in assisting to reduce the effect of these events on the graduate's performance.

The ability to manage emotions is expected to improve work readiness of graduates because the ability to regulate and manage emotions is strongly associated with the quality of everyday social interactions (Lopes et al., 2004).

Emotions serve communicative and social functions, conveying information about thoughts and intentions, and helping to coordinate social encounters (Keltner & Haidt, as cited in Lopes, Grewal, Kadis, Gall, & Salovey, 2006). Because work performance depends on support, advice and other resources provided by others (Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, as cited in Lopes et al., 2006), EI may contribute to work performance by enabling people to nurture positive relationships at work, work effectively in teams and build social capital (Lopes et al., 2006). Furthermore, EI will enable graduates to regulate their emotions so as to cope with stress effectively, perform well under pressure, and adjust to change and express emotions that contribute to favourable social encounters (Lopes et al., 2006). The ability to manage emotions can help people to nurture positive affect, avoid being overwhelmed by negative affect, and cope with stress (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

The availability or lack of resources in the workplace may also affect the extent to which graduates are considered work ready. More so because the lack of resources leads to the development of outcomes such as burnout, which is negatively correlated with performance (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). Resources or lack therefore and their interaction with the demands of the job are discussed in the next section. Developing personal resources, such as PsyCap and SOC, may assist graduates in dealing with the outcomes of high job demands and low resources at work.

2.2.1.1 Job demands, job resources and personal resources

There are a number of factors that contribute to workplace stress, commonly referred to as 'stressors'. Stressors in the workplace can range from technological change and global competitive pressures to toxic work environments and managerial bullying (Colligan & Higgins, as cited in Avey et al., 2009). Every occupation has its own specific risk factors associated with job-related stress (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). It is however important to examine the role of the stressors experienced by new graduates because excessive and unrelieved stress has negative consequences on the experiences of job satisfaction, and contributes to turnover (Chang & Hancock 2003). Demerouti and Bakker (2011) distinguish between two types of stressors in the workplace, namely challenge stressors and hindrance stressors. Challenge stressors are those stressors that promote mastery and personal growth, for example, time pressures and high levels of responsibility which can be physically and psychologically demanding but at the same time have the potential to drive people to perform at their best if they appraise the stressor as a challenge (Nahrgang, Morgeson, & Hoffman, 2011).

Hindrance job stressors are those job demands or work circumstances that involve excessive or undesirable constraints, such as role ambiguity, role conflict and role overload that interfere with or inhibit an individual's ability to achieve valued goals (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). Role ambiguity occurs as a result of a lack of clear, consistent information about the behaviour expected in a role, while role conflict occurs when people are confronted with inconsistencies regarding expectations in the various social statuses they occupy (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, as cited in Vandenberghe, Panaccio, Bentein, Mignonac, & Roussel, 2011). Role overload occurs when people feel inconsistency between the time required to finish the task and the time available for them (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal as cited in Vandenberghe et al., 2011). Role conflict and role ambiguity have been found to cause lower productivity, tension, dissatisfaction and psychological withdrawal (Vandenberghe et al., 2011).

The Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) model of Demerouti and Bakker (2011) is discussed in this study to explain how job demands interact to produce outcomes that can be detrimental to the workplace and especially to illustrate how the inclusion of personal resources, such as those proposed in this study, can lead to different set of outcomes for the organisation. The JD–R model is a theoretical framework that integrates two independent research traditions, the stress research tradition and the motivation research tradition (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). The JD–R model is depicted in Figure 2.1. In short, this model attributes employees' wellbeing to the characteristics of the work environment. Job demands are regarded as the main predictors of negative job strain, while certain job resources are considered to be the most important predictors of workplace engagement (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2007).

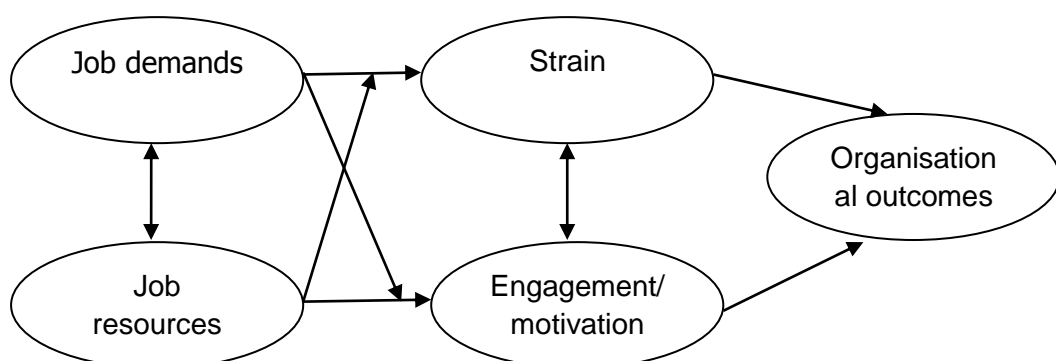


Figure 2.1 *Job Demand–Resource Model*

Bakker & Demerouti (2007, p. 313)

According to Figure 2.1, job demands are those physical, social or organisational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological effort and which are, therefore associated with physiological and/or psychological costs (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001). Job resources are those physical, social or organisational aspects of the job that are functional in achieving work-related goals, reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs, and stimulate personal growth and development (Demerouti et al., 2001). According to Bakker and Demerouti (2007), examples of job resources, which are recognised as crucial for the majority of occupations, include autonomy, social support, supervisory coaching, performance feedback, and opportunities for professional development.

The JD–R model (see Figure 2.1) suggests that the interaction between job demands and job resources is important for the development of either job strain or motivation. Two different underlying psychological processes play a role in the development of job-related strain and motivation (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). The first is a process of health impairment, which suggests that demanding jobs exhaust employees' mental and physical resources and may therefore lead to the depletion of energy (i.e. a state of exhaustion) and health problems (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). This means that graduates who experience their jobs as demanding may experience mental and physical exhaustion, and this might have negative implications on their performance.

The second process proposed by the JD–R model is motivational in nature, where it is assumed that job resources have motivational potential and could lead to high work engagement, low levels of cynicism and excellent performance. Job resources are considered to play an intrinsic motivational role because they are instrumental in achieving work goals, and an extrinsic role, because the work environment fosters the willingness to dedicate one's efforts and abilities to the work task (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). These two categories of work characteristics evoke two relatively independent psychological processes, exhaustion or engagement. High job demands, which require sustained effort, may exhaust employees' resources and lead to energy depletion and health problems (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). By contrast, the availability of job resources leads to organisational commitment and work engagement (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). Therefore job resources foster employees to meet their goals and, in turn, employees may become more committed to their job, because they derive fulfilment from it (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007).

In summary, the JD–R model suggests that stressors occur as a result of role conflict and role ambiguity and other factors in the work environment categorised as job demands. In the absence of job resources, the experience of job demands could lead to the development of outcomes such as burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). This can be offset by the presence of job resources that are functional in achieving work-related goals, reduce job demands and the associated psychological and physical costs, and simulate personal growth and development.

Research (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007; Xanthopoulou et al., 2009) suggests that personal resources may serve a similar purpose as that of job resources in mitigating the experience of job demands. Personal resources, such as EI, SOC and PsyCap, may also make significant contributions as personal resources in dealing with job demands.

Xanthopoulou et al. (2007) investigated the possibility of including personal resources in the JD–R model. They explored the role that personal resources play in offsetting job demands, and came to the conclusion that an employee's personal resources might have a significant role to play in dealing with workplace stressors. Personal resources are described as those aspects of the self that are generally linked to resiliency and which refer to individuals' sense of ability to control and influence their environment successfully (Hobfoll, Johnson, Ennis, & Jackson, as cited in Xanthopoulou et al., 2007). In a study by Xanthopoulou et al. (2007), the reciprocal relationship between job resources, personal resources and work engagement was investigated. The personal resources included efficacy and optimism (subscales of PsyCap). The findings of their study indicated that employees who are self-efficacious and optimistic are most likely to experience high levels of work engagement (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007). In a different study, Xanthopoulou et al. (2009) found evidence to suggest that employees who hold personal resources and who are confident about their capabilities and optimistic about their future are better able to identify and create more aspects of their environment that facilitate goal attainment than those with personal resources. These findings seem to suggest that personal resources may play a significant role in the work readiness of graduates. Based on this, and on the development of the revised JD–R model by Xanthopoulou et al. (2007), further support is gained for the role that personal resources can play in dealing with workplace stressors. The current study proposes EI, SOC and PsyCap as personal resources that can assist recent graduates in dealing with the job demands (see par 2.5).

2.2.2 Transition from university to work

Challenges associated with the transition period from university to work may have an influence on the WR of graduates. Life transitions are periods during which the individual experiences major changes (Lenz, 2001). The changes associated with such transitions bring instability as a person passes through these periods (Lenz, 2001). During this transition period, the individual is typically required to make major changes, to develop new skills, or to learn to cope with new experiences to accommodate the changes (Lenz, 2001). Change and transition are common life features and are usually associated with upward mobility (Lenz, 2001). The process of change may have effects on the psychological wellbeing and health of individuals (Lenz, 2001). The individual experience of change may not only be from exposure to a new environment and stressful situations, but simultaneously the separation from the familiar and secure aspects of the environment of origin (Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2009).

The period from university to work can also be regarded as a transition period (Ng & Feldman, 2007). This period is described as the period during which an individual leaves university and starts employment (Ng & Feldman, 2007). According to Ryan (2001), this period is associated with change, waiting and uncertainty. Transition from university to work is considered a positive upward mobile feature of life (Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2009). It involves new opportunities for advancement and produces many demands and concerns (Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2009). This transitional period is also considered to be a significant and often difficult process for the traditional graduate student. This difficulty is clearly evidenced by the high rate of job turnover among recent graduates (Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2009).

The transition from university to work is one the first major changes young adults have to make in their careers (Polach, 2004). Making the transition from university to a first job is a significant and often stressful process in the life of a young graduate (Polach, 2004). For graduates making this transition, the change can be traumatic. According to Polach (2004), new employees face a myriad of social steps to follow in their new lives – moving to a new city, making friends, managing expenses against a real income, finding a place of worship, and fitting into a social group – all of this in addition to establishing themselves as productive and valuable employees of a new organisation. This experience is often characterised by disorientation, foreignness and a kind of sensory overload (Polach, 2004).

For new graduates, the first year of work is generally a critical life experience. They face challenges and have some feelings that are similar to those of their more experienced counterparts who join a new organisation (Polach, 2004).

However recent graduates who enter the world of work today also face unique challenges that are likely to decrease their chances of employment, like the state of the economy and the country's growth rate (Potgieter & Coetzee, 2013), which all affect employment opportunities. Successfully managing the transition can be difficult and the outcomes of adapting to the work roles have far-reaching implications (Graham & McKenzie, 1995). How smoothly that transition occurs helps set the pattern for the individual's willingness to change jobs, organisations and occupations later in life and also how the individual copes with those subsequent career changes (Ng & Feldman, 2007).

According to Wendlandt and Rochlen (2009), there are factors closely related to the transition from university to work that further pose challenges for recent graduates. These include changes in culture associated with the transition between two different environments, the lack of experience and skills required by employers, and inaccurate expectations about work life. These four issues are discussed briefly in the next section.

2.2.2.1 Change in culture

One of the most obvious elements of the change in the transition from university to work is the dramatic change in culture (Graham & McKenzie, 1995). Research indicates that school and industry environments are distinct in purpose, activity, rules and hierarchy (Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2009). Research further suggests that the culture of the work environment differs significantly from the culture students experience in the university setting in a different number of ways. Phillips (as cited in Graham & McKenzie, 1995) states that the culture in organisations is vastly different from that on campus, and must be thoroughly understood by new graduates or they will be doomed to fail. Most newcomers undergo a reality or culture shock because they do not understand the culture of the organisation very well before joining an organisation (Holton, 1995). Culture change will have the most immediate effect when the graduate actually arrives at work on the first day.

The work environment can create strong feelings of insecurity, although this can be overcome by the graduates' desire to learn, to work hard and to prove themselves' in a new environment. Graduates usually quickly discover that there is a lot to learn about the new job and their new company (Polach, 2004).

One participant in a study by Polach (2004, p. 13) stated, “it seemed like everything was standard for the longer-term employees. But when I came in, I realised nothing was written down anywhere...”

Other issues include interactions with peers in the workplace (Polach, 2004). Graduates tend to discover quickly how different it is to make friends at work from making friends at university and how critical it is to feel settled and have a sense of belonging (Polach, 2004). The two environments differ especially in the amount of structure and feedback provided (Polach, 2004). At university, students are accustomed to receiving constant feedback from lecturers, something which might not necessarily occur in the workplace (Rayer, as cited in Polach, 2004).

2.2.2.2 Lack of skills and experience

Generally, the view in literature is that most employers are of the opinion that the knowledge, skills, competencies and values of new graduates may not be synchronised with the needs and expectations of employers (Archer & Davison, 2008; Boden & Nedeva, 2010; Pop & Barkhuizen, 2010; Vatiswa, 2014). Holden and Jameson (as cited in Zwane et al., 2013) point out that graduates are regarded by many small and medium enterprise (SME) employers as being impractical, reluctant to get their hands dirty, slow to become productive and inclined to hold a poor view of what employment in an SME should be like.

According to Lowden et al. (2011), employers expect graduates to have technical and discipline competences from their degrees but also require graduates to demonstrate a range of skills and attributes such as team-working, communication, leadership, critical thinking, problem-solving and managerial abilities. Graduate recruiters want a variety of other skills, personal and intellectual attributes over and above specialist subject knowledge (Lowden et al., 2011). Literature indicates that employers want graduates who can adapt to the workplace culture, use their abilities and skills to evolve the organisation and participate in innovative teamwork (Lowden et al., 2011).

2.2.2.3 Inaccurate expectations about work life

Along with the difficulties associated with the change in culture and a lack of skills required from graduates in the work environment, Wendlandt and Rochlen (2009) argue that college graduates often hold unrealistic expectations of the workplace and their role as employees.

The move from university to work involves major changes for new graduates, and the transition can be particularly difficult because the graduates' expectations tend to be exaggerated (Graham & McKenzie, 1995). These high expectations can however be due to unrealistic recruitment brochures and processes by the employer who can sometimes build up expectations to ridiculous levels (Graham & McKenzie, 1995). Results of a study by Burke (1998) on work stressors among recent graduates in business school indicated that graduates experienced unmet expectations, and almost 40% of the sample felt that they were in danger of losing their jobs as a result of this.

Because of the graduates limited experience, Gardner and Lambert (as cited in Polach, 2004) discovered that graduates had a difficult time hearing and seeing the indirect politics, goals, and performance standards of their employers. Graduates may be unsure about the job they will actually be doing, what it will be like, the way the work will have to be done and in which setting (Graham & McKenzie 1995). Graduates' reasons for joining their employer will naturally reflect their expectations of working life in that organisation. Graduates in years 2, 3, and 4 of their tenure are preoccupied with proving their worth and advancing in their chosen line of work (Graham & McKenzie, 1995).

This suggests that challenging work and prospects of career advancement will be uppermost in the minds of graduates (Arnold & Davey, 1999). The experience of role stress by recent graduates has been well researched within the nursing community (Zhang et al., 2001). Role stress may be viewed as the consequences of disparity between an individual's perception of the characteristics of a specific role and what is actually being achieved by the individual currently performing the specific role (Lambert & Lambert, as cited in Chang & Hancock, 2003). Role ambiguity and role overload have also been identified as sources of stress during the transition from student to graduate nurse (Chang & Hancock, 2003).

Fresh graduates also had high expectations of receiving frequent and ongoing feedback from their bosses. This according to Rayer (as cited in Polach, 2004), can be ascribed to the fact that in university they received frequent and immediate feedback. At university, they are assigned tasks and receive a grade which indicates their level of performance. In the work environment, feedback is not as frequent and receiving frequent, job-relevant feedback was a clear expectation of the college graduates (Polach, 2004). In a study by Polach (2004), graduates reported experiencing frustration and a sense of uncertainty because they did not receive regular feedback from their supervisor. The results of these unmet expectations are associated with negative consequences for outcomes such as newcomer tenure and a lack of commitment (Arnold, Schalk, Bosley, & Van Overbeek, 2002).

The period of transition from school to work is associated with change and instability (Ng & Feldman, 2007). It is described as a period of great stress, disorientation and a kind of sensory overload (Ryan, 2001). This is further compounded by the massive changes in culture that may require some time to get used to, as well as dealing with the experience of unmet expectations (Graham & McKenzie, 1995). This may lead to great stress and anxiety and, if not dealt with appropriately, may have an effect on the kind of performance a graduate will be able to deliver in the organisation, subsequently affecting his/her WR.

2.2.3 Life and career development stages of graduates

One way to characterise a person's life or career is by identifying common experiences, challenges or tasks that the person goes through as his/her life and career progresses (DeSimone & Werner, 2012). Research on adult development stages and career development stages suggests that adult life and career development follow a series of common stages (Greenhaus & Callanan, 1994). Understanding the different life and career stages of graduates can offer a perspective on the kind of challenges that graduate students are facing in the workplace.

Before embarking on a discussion of the theories of life and career stages, it is important to highlight some of the criticism levelled against these theories that might put doubt in the minds of others in terms of their utility value. The theories of life and career stages have also been criticised in literature (DeSimone & Werner, 2012). The stages theories have been largely criticised for tending to describe what happens to the typical person and ignoring the fact that people are unique and will not have the same experiences (DeSimone & Werner, 2012). More specifically, the criticism comes from the use of age or life experiences or both, to define when a stage is likely to begin and end (DeSimone & Werner, 2012). The criticism is that, using age as a criterion and arguing that major life events such as marriage and one's first job occur at certain stages, ignores the fact that different people go through life differently (DeSimone & Werner, 2012). Firm believers in the stage theory, such as Levinson, defends it by arguing that the age ranges that he uses, while flexible, are based on empirical research evidence (DeSimone & Werner, 2012). Nonetheless, stage theories have been instrumental in offering an understanding of the kind of personal challenges that individuals go through in the progression of their lives and careers (DeSimone & Werner, 2012)..

In this study, the researcher chose to focus specifically on the Levinson et al. (as cited in Ornstein, Cron, & Slocum, 1989) model (see par 2.2.3.1) to discuss adult development stages and the Greenhaus and Callanan (2004) model (see par 2.2.3.2) to discuss career development stages. These models were chosen because they were deemed relevant to the study as they incorporate literature that identifies critical challenges that individuals deal with at different stages of their adult and career lives. More important, the Greenhaus and Callanan (1994) model is based in part on the views of Levinson et al.'s (as cited in Ornstein et al., 1989) adult development stages. The argument put forth in this section is that the unique challenges associated with being in a particular life and/or career stage as described by the stage theories may have an effect on the graduates' WR. In this next section, a review of the leading theories of life and career stages will be reviewed with a focus on the stages relevant to graduates and the challenges therein.

2.2.3.1 Adult development stages

Levinson et al. (as cited in Ornstein et al., 1989) developed a view of how adults develop based on the notion that adult lives progress through seasons (DeSimone & Werner, 2012; Levinson, 1986; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2007).

Levinson initially discovered these stages by collecting intensive biographical information from individuals in different walks of life over a period of years (Ornstein et al., 1989). He argues that there is an underlying order to adult life called the life cycle (DeSimone & Werner, 2012; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2007). The four eras proposed by the Levinson et al. (as cited in Ornstein et al., 1989) model are: pre-adulthood, early adulthood, middle adulthood and late adulthood. The Levinson's et al. era model (as cited in Ornstein et al., 1989) depicted in Table 2.2 indicates the different eras as well as a brief description of the stable and transitional periods. Transitional periods are periods which terminate the existing life structures and create the possibility for a new one (Levinson, 1986). The primary task of these periods is to reappraise the existing structure, to explore possibilities for change and to move toward commitment to the crucial choices that form the basis for a new life structure in the next period (Levinson, 1986). The stable periods can be expected to last about six years and the within-era transitional periods last about four to five years (DeSimone & Werner, 2012; Levinson, 1986; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2007).

Table 2.1
Levinson's Era Model

| Life stage (age) | Tasks to be accomplished |
|---|--|
| Early adulthood (20-40) Early adult transition (17-22) | To begin thinking about one's place in the world separate from the institution of youth (e.g. parents, school) To test one's initial choices about preferences for adult living |
| Entering the adult world (23-28) | To develop a sense of personal identity in the world of work and non-work (e.g. family, community) |
| Thirties transitions (34-39) | To strive toward achievement of personal and professional goals To make a strong commitment to work, family, and community |
| Middle adulthood (40-60) Mid-life transition (40-45) | To review life structure adopted in the 30s To recognise mortality and limits as regards achievement and to answer the questions raised by these issues |
| Entering middle adulthood (46-50) | To develop greater stability as answers to questions posed in earlier stages are incorporated into mindset |
| Fifties transition (51-55) | To raise questions about life structure previously adopted |
| Culmination of middle adulthood (56-60) | To answer questions previously raised and adjusted to life choices |

Levinson et al. (as cited in Ornstein et al., 1989, p.118)

Relevant to this study is the early adulthood period (20–40). This era coincides with the time that graduates start work. According to Levinson (1986), this can be described as a stage of great energy, abundance, contradiction and stress. During this era, the person is at a biological peak and is striving to attain the goals and desires of youth. Finding a place in society, obtaining meaningful work, and raising a family are all part of the goals of this period (DeSimone & Werner, 2012; Levinson, 1986; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2007). The primary tasks during this phase include finding a place for oneself in the adult world. This involves two tasks which can be of an opposing nature, namely exploring the adult world and creating a stable adult life structure at the same time. In exploring the adult world, options are kept open, commitments are avoided, alternatives are maximised with a sense of adventure (DeSimone & Werner, 2012; Levinson, 1986; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2007).

Creating a stable adult life structure, on the other hand, involves becoming responsible for establishing family relations and a stable work structure (Levinson, 1986; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2007). An inability to find a balance between these tasks can cause confusion and stress and consequently, either a rootless, transient quality of life or a premature adult life structure that is not based on sufficient exploration (Levinson, 1986; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2007).

The transition at age thirty is also relevant to this study because this transition is currently expected to occur between the ages 20–35 due to the changing characteristics of the contemporary workplace and the dynamic 21st-century career (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2007). This period now coincides with the recent graduate's entry into the workplace. The age thirty transition is generally being referred to as the 'quarter-life crises' and can be quite overwhelming for the young adult (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2007). Individuals experiencing a quarter-life crises or quandary are confronted by life questions such as, which career should I focus on, where should I live and where do I belong? Results of a survey by Schreuder and Coetzee (2007) indicate that young adults between the age of 20 and 30 are experiencing life and career challenges of earning a living, finding a job matching's one's qualifications, continuously furthering one's qualifications and gaining more experience, work disillusionment and living one's dream (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2007).

2.2.3.2 Career development stages

Several models of career development such as Schein (1978) and Super (1980) have been offered to explain the sequence of stages that adults progress through during their work lives. These models emphasise the notion of an orderly series of career stages linked to age ranges and place the career in the context of a person's life, and contain overlapping concepts. Two of the leading theorists in career development are Greenhaus and Callanan (1994), who proposed a five-stage model of career development: stage 1: occupational choice (0–25), stage 2: organisational entry (18–25), stage 3: the early career (25–40), stage 4: the midcareer and stage 5: the late career.

Table 2.2
Five Stages of Career Development

| Stage | Age range | Major tasks |
|---|------------------|--|
| Occupational choice | 0–25 | Develop occupational self-image, assess alternative occupations, develop initial choice, and pursue necessary education. |
| Entry into the organisation | 18–25 | Obtain job offers(s) from desired organisation(s), select appropriate job based on accurate information. |
| Early career: establishment and achievement | 25–40 | Learn job, learn organisational rules and norms, fit into chosen occupation and organisation, increase competence, pursue dream. |
| Midcareer | 40–45 | Reappraise early career and early adulthood, reaffirm or modify dream, make choices appropriate to middle adult years, remain productive in work |
| Late career | 55–retirement | Remain productive in work, maintain self-esteem, prepare for effective retirement |

Greenhaus & Callanan (1994, p. 102)

The stages relevant to this study are stages two and three (see Table 2.3). Stage two, entry into the organisation, which is expected to occur during the ages of 18 to 25, is concerned with the individual selecting a job and an organisation in which to begin employment in a chosen career field (Greenhaus & Callanan, 1994). The major tasks in stage one involve forming and defining an idea of the first occupation the individual would like to engage in and making necessary preparations for entry into that occupation. A successful outcome of this stage is the choice of a job that can satisfy one's career values and utilise one's talents (Greenhaus & Callanan, 1994). Many individuals' job selection is based on incomplete or unrealistic information and this may lead to an experience of dissatisfaction when the reality of the work environment does not live up to their expectations. See discussion on unmet expectations in par 2.2.2.3.

Stage three of the Greenhaus and Callanan (1994) model is organised around Levinson et al. (as cited in Ornstein et al., 1989) view of adult development. In stage three, early career, which is expected to occur between the ages of 25 and 40, the individual is dealing with finding a place in the world and pursuing his or her life dream (Greenhaus & Callanan, 1994). This stage encompasses two periods. It reflects the dominant issues of early adulthood, which are finding a niche for oneself in the adult world and striving to 'make it' in the chosen career path (Greenhaus & Callanan, 1994). Further challenges in terms of career development include becoming proficient and becoming assimilated into the culture of the organisation (Haase, Heckhausen, & Silbereisen, 2012). Successful resolution of these challenges can result in job satisfaction, advancement in terms of position and responsibility, and increased financial and social rewards (Haase et al., 2012). A successful entry into work has important long-term consequences for mental, physical, health and personality development, social relationships, and the career success of graduates (Haase et al., 2012).

In brief, the life and career development stages such as Levinson (1986) and Greenhaus and Callanan (1994) seek to explain how individuals progress through a series of stages with the associated challenges. The early adulthood period is of interest to this study, as it captures an era when graduates transition from university to work. This stage is also associated with competing tasks, which when not approached correctly can cause great stress and confusion and a premature adult life structure (DeSimone & Werner, 2012; Levinson, 1986; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2007). The stress and confusion caused by the imbalances in meeting the tasks associated with the above-mentioned life stages may have a spill over effect on the performance on graduates. This may occur in a situation where the graduate wishes to explore the world, and this may not be compatible with work expectations, which requires certain commitments that the graduate may not be able to provide (Levinson 1986, Schreuder & Coetzee, 2007). Alternatively, the graduate may pursue a more stable adult life and experience challenges with work–life balance because, according to the theory on career development (see par 2.2.3.2), at this stage, career-wise, graduates are more concerned with making their mark and establishing themselves in the organisation.

2.3 GRADUATES' ATTRIBUTES

The focus of this study was on investigating the relationship between EI, SOC and PsyCap and the WR of graduates. The argument was that these variables could be instrumental in the preparation of graduates for the world of work and in assisting graduates to deal with the challenges in the work environment that affect their WR.

Although the focus of this study was not on graduates' attributes, any discussion on graduates and their employability status requires a discussion of graduate attributes and their role in higher education.

Graduate attributes are defined by Bowden et al. (as cited in Barrie, 2004, p. 262) as "the qualities, skills and understandings a university community agrees its students should develop during their time with the institution". These are generic attributes that should be acquired by all the university students regardless of their discipline or field of study.

Graduate attributes determine how graduates enter the world of work, guide the way graduates participate in society and, consequently, shape the contributions that graduates are able to make to their profession and as citizens (Bridgstock, 2009; Van Schalkwyk, Herman, & Muller, 2010). The underlying premise with regard to the attainment of these attributes is that their achievement would lead to enhanced employability (Oliver, 2013).

Universities in Australia, such as the University of Sydney, and Yale in America, have constructed their own unique lists of desirable graduate attributes (Bridgstock, 2009; Walsh & Kotzee, 2010). The University of Sydney's expectations of their graduates include scholarship, global citizenship and life-long learning and they see these skills developed through "research and inquiry", "information literacy", "personal and intellectual autonomy", "ethical, social and professional understanding", and "communication" (Walsh & Kotzee, 2010, p.37,). In South Africa, Stellenbosch University (SU) and the University of Cape Town (UCT) have also developed graduate attributes that they wish their students to display upon graduation. According to the SU Teaching and Learning strategy document (Stellenbosch University), the following are graduate attributes of a SU student:

- *An enquiring mind*: a lifelong learner who thinks critically and creatively, and who uses systematic methods of enquiry to formulate decisions. An enquiring mind is open to new as well as diverse ideas, is willing to learn from the received wisdom of the past, as well as to invent new ways of knowing and doing.
- *An engaged citizen*: an engaged citizen is one who is able to exercise leadership, and one who understands how to contribute as a member of a team and community; thus, to collaborate and be of service. An engaged citizen cares for him- or herself and exercises care for others in increasingly widening concentric circles.

- *A dynamic professional*: an SU graduate should have benefitted from the opportunity to learn to apply and communicate knowledge in various community, business, professional and personal settings. These forms of communication are oral, written, digital and multi-modal.
- *A well-rounded individual*: the value of an SU curriculum should be evident in its cultivation of the humanity of the graduate. It should offer opportunities for the student to grow along social and individual dimensions, and along intellectual as well as effective dimensions.

According to Bridgstock (2009), the definition by Bowden et al. (as cited in Bridgstock, 2009) of graduate attributes encompasses two main types of attributes. The first refers to graduate attributes as those attributes which pertain to an individual's capacity for citizenship and thus his/her ability to contribute towards a well-functioning society (such as those constructed by SU) and the second, refers to those which pertain to an individual's capacity to obtain and maintain work and thus contribute to economic productivity. It is the latter type of attributes that was the focus of this study. This study proposed viewing EI, SOC and PsyCap as part of graduates' attributes, more specifically, the kind that refers to an individual capacity to obtain and maintain work.

The development of graduates' attributes is considered a function of both the university and the student (Van Schalkwyk et al., 2010). Although the onus of developing the graduates' attributes rests on both parties, Bowden et al. (as cited in McNeil et al., 2011) state that there are three principal arguments why universities should take the lead in achieving generic capability development. The first reason derives from a traditional role of universities to produce graduates of social good in the community. The second reason relates to "employability", i.e. the idea that employers desire university graduates who are 'work ready', possessing capabilities important for successful business or professional practice. The final argument is that generic capabilities are important to students for post-graduation learning and adaptation to rapid changes in knowledge and professional practice (Bowden et al., as cited in McNeil et al., 2011). Ensuring the development of these attributes may improve graduates' possibilities of success in the challenging and dynamic employment environment (McNeil et al., 2011).

In summary, graduate attributes refer to a statement that the university makes about the kind of students that they wish to produce for the labour market. There are two kinds of graduate attributes, those that relate to an individuals' capacity for citizenship and those that relate to an individual's capacity to obtain and maintain work.

It is considered to be in the best interest of universities to take the lead in the development of graduates' attributes, because producing graduates who are ready for the work environment is their core business (McNeil et al., 2011). There is however a lack of clarity and consensus on what it means to be 'ready for work' or 'work readiness'.

2.4 WORK READINESS

Caballero and Walker (2010, p. 17) define WR as "the extent to which graduates are perceived to possess the attitudes and attributes that make them prepared or ready for success in the work environment". There is a range of terms used in literature to describe the notion of work readiness, including 'graduate employability', and 'graduateness'. A review of literature indicated that these terms are similar to WR and overlap in the skills and attributes that indicate graduates' work readiness. Graduate employability is defined by Yorke (2006, p. 8) as a "set of achievement-skills, understandings and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefit themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy". This definition by Yorke is similar to that of Harvey (2001 p. 98) who defines graduate employability as the "propensity of the graduate to exhibit attributes that employers anticipate will be necessary for the future effective functioning of their organisation". According to Harvey (2010), the definition of graduate employability alludes to graduates' attributes and implies that these individuals have and are able to demonstrate these attributes in order to obtain jobs. These attributes and the ability to demonstrate them when required, may already have been acquired before undertaking a higher education programme and just needed honing, may be in the process of being developed, or may be missing altogether (Harvey, 2010).

Chetty (n.d.) uses the term "graduateness", which is defined by Chetty (n.d., p.4) as the "skills, knowledge and understanding graduate possess". Walsh and Kotzee (2010, p. 38) define graduateness as "the quality that graduates have that prepares them for the graduate-level work or even for work as such". Kizito (2010, p. 2) defines graduateness as "the extent to which the set of graduate attributes have been attained". The above-mentioned definitions, although using different terminology, allude to the same thing. They emphasise the possession of certain skills, knowledge and attributes by graduates which will enable them to be ready for and successful in the work environment, the extent to which they possess these skills and attributes contributes to their employability (Chetty, n.d.; Kizito, 2010; Walsh & Kotzee, 2010). The next session provides a discussion of the link between WR and employability.

2.4.1 The relationship between work readiness and employability

Employability is a broad and multi-dimensional term that has been given very wide interpretation, and there are many interpretations of the term. For man, employability is simply about getting a job (Pool & Sewell, 2007). There is, however, a need to distinguish between factors relevant to obtaining a job and factors relevant to the preparation for work (Little, as cited in Lees, 2002).

The different definitions of employability range from simple to more complex. The most simple of definitions is by Hillage and Pollard (1998, p. 1) who define employability as “being capable of getting and keeping fulfilling work or the capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market to realise potential through sustainable employment’. However, this simplistic view, according to Brown et al. (as cited in Yorke, 2006), does not acknowledge that the conditions of local, national and international labour markets are a powerful determinant of a graduate’s success. Harvey (2001) argues that defining employability in this manner confuses the employability processes with outcomes. Boden and Nedeva (2010) are also critical of this traditional definition of employability, as they point out that it does not permit focus on the efficacy of the educational process because the picture is muddled by factors such as the state of labour markets. Brown et al. (as cited in Yorke, 2006) proposes describing employability as a relative chance of acquiring and maintaining different kinds of employment.

The more complex definitions of employability focus on individual skills, attributes and other competencies. One such definition is that of Fugate, Kinicki, and Ashforth (2004, p. 15) who define employability as “a psycho-social construct that embodies individual characteristics that foster adaptive cognition, behaviour and affect, and enhance the individual-work interface”. Other authors such as Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden (2006, p. 453) define employability as the “continuous fulfilling, acquiring or creating of work through the optimal use of competencies’.

Tan and French-Arnold (2012, p. 2012) define employability as referring to “a wide range of attributes and competencies that enable the job seekers to gain and maintain employment such as communication skills, logical, analytical and problem solving skills, amongst others”. Yorke and Knight (2004, p. 5) define employability as “a set of achievements, understandings and personal attributes that make individuals more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations”.

The above-mentioned definitions of employability represent a shift from an individual getting a job to a definition that places at its core the individual acquisition of a set of attributes that makes one appealing to a range of employers (Boden & Nedeva, 2010). When seen through this lens, employability is thus an outcome of multiple factors.

Certain definitions of employability have adopted the same focus in defining employability; however, they also distinguish between different dimensions:

- *Individual characteristics*: Boom and Metselaar (2001) and Harvey (2001) measure employability on the basis of a number of characteristics of individuals, mostly their ability to find and keep a job is examined.
- *Context*: Other definitions of employability do not solely focus on the individual but involve other parties, for instance, the employer's demand for labour in the study of internal employability.
- *Effect*: another group of research measures employability by its effects. Hillage and Pollard (1998) look at somebody's labour market position in order to assess his or her employability. These authors do not only consider whether or not a person has a job, but they also look at the quality of that job, considering factors such as its link with the degree, possibilities for growth, etc.
- *Activities*: other definitions of employability focus on employability-enhancing activities. They focus on the extent to which individuals take part in activities such as training, task enrichment, etc. and consider attitude and behaviour of employees towards enhancing their employability.

However it is defined or identified, *employability* should not be confused with *employment* (Yorke, 2006). According to Yorke (2006, p. 7), "employability implies something about the capacity of the graduate to function in a job, and it is not be confused with the acquisition of a job, whether a 'graduate job' or otherwise". Being employed means having a job, being employable means having the qualities needed to maintain employment and progress in the workplace (Lees, 2002). According to McQuid and Lindsay (2005), there are three interrelated components that influence employability:

- individual factors that include attributes (e.g. basic social skills), competencies (e.g. motivation, confidence), transferable skills (e.g. literacy, numeracy, problem-solving, communication, adaptability, team-working skills), qualifications and educational attainments;

- personal circumstances that relate to the individual's social and household circumstances (e.g. family and caring responsibility, access to resources); and
- external factors that cover labour demand conditions (macroeconomic factors, vacancy characteristics, recruitment factors) and enabling support factors (accessibility of public services and job-matching technologies).

In this study, employability was taken to be referring to the capacity of graduates to enter the national or international workplace (Glover, Law, & Youngman, as cited in Chetty, n.d.), while WR is concerned with the possession of those attitudes and attributes which contribute to making entering the workplace possible, that is they increase employability. So, in order for graduates to gain meaningful employment they must possess skills and attributes required by the workplace (Chetty, n.d.), and this is the link between WR and employability.

2.4.2 Work readiness and employability skills

Different terms are used to refer to the skills required for employability, terms such as 'traditional intellectual skills', 'key skills', 'personal attributes', and 'knowledge of organisations' (Coopers & Lybrand, 1998). Others use different, but equally broad expressions such as: 'key', 'core', 'generic', 'personal', 'transferable', 'work/employment-related' skills (Barrie, 2006). These skills are also described as either 'hard (when associated with subject-specific knowledge), or as 'soft' (when they refer to the ability to do something based on more attitude and behaviour) (Chetty, n.d.). This imprecision makes it difficult to pinpoint exactly which skills are necessary for employability (Lees, 2002). This difficulty is also perpetuated by the fact that some educational programmes prepare students for a specific profession, or a limited set of jobs and occupations, like medicine (Lees, 2002). Other programmes prepare students for a broad range of occupations, for example economics, which results in differences in the priority of the different skills (Semejin et al., 2005). Moreover, priorities may vary when considering competencies that are most important for entering the labour market versus those that are most important for functioning later in the career (Semejin et al., 2005). This could also be the reason why very general descriptions of the type of skills required for employability exist in literature (Boden & Nedeva, 2010).

There are a variety of skills or attributes indicative of work readiness in literature (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006). There are also differences in the skill expectations of employers, graduates and higher education institutions (Chetty, n.d.).

As interest in promoting graduate employability has increased, numerous studies have produced detailed breakdowns and taxonomies of particular work readiness skills and attributes required to promote graduates' employability (Burnett & Jayaram, 2012; Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Griesel & Parker, 2009; Lowden et al., 2011).

A number of scholars such as Burnett and Jayaram (2012), Casner-Lotto and Barrington, (2006), Griesel and Parker (2009) and Lowden et al. (2011) have produced lists of skills that were seen to be essential to promote graduates' employability from both the perspective of the student and the employer. Due to the disparities in understanding what is meant by the various categories (Bridgstock, 2009), there have been few attempts to identify the commonalities, limitations and deficiencies between the various lists to provide a research-based synthesis of work readiness attributes (Chetty, n.d.).

These skills are also categorised in a multitude of ways (Chetty, n.d.). Literature distinguishes between field-specific competences and generic competences. According to Hager et al. (2002), the term "generic competencies/skills" is widely used to refer to a mixed bag of skills components, attitudes, values and dispositions. These skills include for example, thinking skills (such as logical and analytical reasoning, problem solving and intellectual curiosity), communication skills, teamwork skills, personal attributes such as creativity, intellectual rigour, and values such as ethical practice, persistence, integrity and tolerance (Hager et al., 2002).

Generic competencies go beyond technical skills to include attitudes, values and dispositions (Hager et al., 2002). Generic skills are not job-specific, but are skills which cut horizontally across all industries and vertically across all jobs from entry level to chief executive officers (Singh & Singh, 2008). Skills that are transferable to a variety of situations are the ones most desired by employers (Robinson, Garton, & Vaughn, 2007). These skills are required for effective performance in a wide of range of jobs and various settings (Zhang et al., 2001). Such skills are generic in nature rather than specific to any particular subject discipline or occupation (Smith & Kruger, 2008). Field-specific competencies, on the other hand, refer to profession- or field-specific knowledge and skills that are relevant for the type of jobs for which the educational programme prepares a student (Semeijn et al., 2005).

This research proposed investigating the variables of EI, SOC and PsyCap as part of the generic skills that contribute to making graduates employable, because no emphasis has yet been placed on graduates' personal qualities, which could make a considerable contribution to graduates' success (Yorke, 2001).

According to Lees (2002), being in possession of employer-relevant knowledge and skills is not enough for an individual to move within the labour market and to realise his/her potential.

There are connections made in literature between employability and personal qualities such as emotional intelligence (Lees, as cited in McGrath, n.d.). Jobs these days are increasingly requiring skills that previously were thought of as not so important for most workers (Hager et al., 2002), such as personal qualities.

Naturally, the balance between skills and the importance of each generic skill will vary for different groups of individuals, depending on their relationship to the labour market (Lowden et al., 2011). However, research indicates that, regardless of the size of the company, personal skills are perceived to have the same weight as technical or hard skills (Lowden et al., 2011). Some employers see a degree as a proxy for achieving a certain level of competence that represents the minimum standard that they are seeking in a new recruit (Lowden et al., 2011).

Boden and Nedeva (2010, p.42) argue that it is not possible in principle to define precisely the content of skills required for “employability as it is a point where employers’ needs and individuals’ attributes meet and this will vary over time”. Therefore, there is no single list of work readiness skills that can be grabbed hold of and applied to all situations because of the multiple contextual factors, such as the programmes being delivered, the history and local environment of the university, its staff and student profiles, which are likely to matter (McGrath, n.d.). According to the literature, very few models have been developed in an attempt to capture the skill/attributes that contribute to work readiness. These models are briefly discussed in par 2.4.2.1.

To summarise, there a wide variety of work readiness skills is described in literature, and are classified as either core or generic skills. Core, key or field-specific skills refer to those knowledge and skills that are relevant for the type of job for which an educational programme prepares a student for (Barrie, 2006; Chetty, n.d.; Coopers & Lybrand, 1998; Hager et al., 2002). Generic skills, on the other hand, go beyond technical skills and include all competencies required for effective performance across different occupations (Barrie, 2006; Chetty, n.d.; Coopers & Lybrand, 1998; Hager et al., 2002). These skills, be they core or generic, indicate the extent to which graduates are perceived to be work ready (Barrie, 2006; Chetty, n.d.; Coopers & Lybrand, 1998; Hager et al., 2002).

There are a number of lists (Burnett & Jayaram, 2012; Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Griesel & Parker, 2009; Lowden et al., 2011) which describe the type of generic skills that are regarded as essential; however, there is little to no mention of personal qualities as generic skills that contribute to WR. Given this gap, this research advocates for the inclusion of EI, SOC and PsyCap as personal resources that contribute to WR and subsequently to the employability of graduates.

2.4.2.1 Employability models

Various models have been proposed in literature, which seek to capture the elusive concept of employability. Hillage and Pollard (1998) propose a model of employability which consists of four main elements:

- the person's employability assets, which consist of knowledge, skills and attitudes;
- deployment assets, which include career management skills and job-searching skills;
- presentation, which is concerned with job-getting skills such as CV writing, work experience and interview techniques; and lastly
- whether a person will be able to make most of these employability assets, will depend on an interaction between such person's personal circumstances (such as family responsibilities) and external factors, like current levels of job opportunities.

Bezuidenhout and Coetzee (as cited in Potgieter & Coetzee, 2013, p. 25) developed an attributes framework, which describes a set of eight core employability attributes that are important for increasing the likelihood of securing and sustaining employment opportunities. The attributes are career self-management, cultural competence, self-efficacy, career resilience, sociability, entrepreneurial orientation, proactivity and emotional literacy.

Pool and Sewell (2007) developed a model of employability based on an assumption that each component is absolutely essential and if one element was missing, it would considerably reduce the graduate's ability. The model suggests that, providing students with opportunities to access and develop all things in the lower tier (career development learning, experience, knowledge, understanding and skills, generic skills and EI) and essentially, reflecting on and evaluating these experiences, will result in development of higher levels of self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem, which are considered the crucial links to employability (Pool & Sewell, 2007). The design of the model reflects the assertion that each component is absolutely essential and, according to the authors, one missing element will considerably reduce a graduate's ability. Depicted in Figure 2.1 is Pool and Sewell (2007) model of employability.



Figure 2.2 Components of Employability

Pool & Sewell (2007, p. 280)

The components of the employability model are as follows (Pool & Sewell, 2007):

- *Degree of subject knowledge, understanding and skills:* Employers still judge graduates on the basis of how successfully they have completed their degree course; thus, knowledge, understanding and skills are considered the central concept of the model. Studying a specific discipline in depth and gaining a degree and a decent job are considered the greatest motivators for entering higher education, because those who are better qualified have greater employment opportunities than those who are less qualified. However, even though knowledge, understanding and skills are essential, it is important to understand that alone they are unlikely to secure graduates occupations in which they can be satisfied.
- *Generic skill:* employers want graduates with specific knowledge, understanding and skills but, in addition, are looking for well-developed generic skills in a number of areas. Research indicates (Coopers & Lybrand, 1998; Hager et al., 2002) that employers expect the following generic skills amongst others to have been developed in graduates: ability to work under pressure, ability to manage others, good oral communication, time management, ability to use new technologies, numeracy, working in teams. There is also an emphasis on the development of entrepreneurship skills. For this model, Pool and Sewell (2007) suggest that a graduate who can be described as enterprising would be an imaginative, creative and willing learner.

- *Emotional intelligence*: according to this model, to achieve his/her true employability potential, a graduate will need to have well-developed EI competencies. Using Goleman's (1998, p. 317) definition, EI is defined "as the capacity for recognising our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships".
- *Career development learning*: for graduates to have the best chance of securing employment, it is essential that they receive education in career development. This should include activities that help students to become more self-aware, to enable them to give real consideration to the things they enjoy doing and are interested in. They also need to learn how best to research the job markets to see which opportunities are available to them, how to present themselves to prospective employers and how to make considered decisions about their careers.
- *Experience work and life*: work experience is considered one of the things that employers value greatly. Graduates with work experience are more likely to secure employment than those without.
- *Reflection and evaluation*: it is important to provide students with opportunities for reflection on and evaluation of the learning experiences that had already taken place. Students are unlikely to give full consideration to how far they have come in developing their employability and what they need to do in order to develop further without these opportunities.
- *Self-efficacy/self-confidence/self-esteem*: these closely related concepts provide a crucial link between knowledge, understanding, skills, experience and personal attributes and employability.

Unlike the other models, Pool and Sewell's (2007) model recognises the role that intrapersonal factors such as EI play in contributing to employability. Furthermore, the models contain self-efficacy, a component of PsyCap. The model by Pool and Sewell (2007) is a further illustration of the role that personal resources (EI, SOC and PsyCap) may play in the employability of graduates.

2.5 PERSONAL RESOURCES

Resources are described as entities that are either valuable or which can be used in obtaining centrally valued ends external to the individual (Kira, Eijnatten, & Balkin, 2010).

Personal resources are described as positive self-evaluations that are linked to resiliency and which refer to individual's sense of ability to control and affect his/her environment successfully (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). As such, these resources are functional in achieving goals, protecting from threats and the associated physiological and psychological costs, and stimulating personal growth and development (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009).

Personal characteristics can be considered resources to the extent that they generally aid stress resistance (Hobfoll, 1989). This is paralleled with Antonovsky's (1979) general resistance resources, which suggest that one's personal orientation toward the world is the key to seeing events as predictable and generally occurring in one's best interest (Hobfoll, 1989). Personal resources can be dispositional orientations or habitual behaviours (Kira et al., 2010). Unlike personality traits, which are considered to be stable and relatively fixed, personal resources are malleable and open to change and development (Xanthopoulou et al. 2009).

According to Antonovsky (as cited in Kira et al., 2010), personal resources can function as a source of strength. Oginska-Bulik (2005b), investigating the role of personal and social resources in preventing adverse health outcomes, found that subjects with high levels of resources perceived their work environment as less stressful (with respect to factors such as lack of support, work overload, social relationships and lack of control) and showed fewer mental health disorders (such as somatic complaints and anxiety) than those with low levels of resources. The higher the personal resources, the more positive the individual's self-regard. It is therefore expected that participants with high levels of EI, SOC and PsyCap (as their personal resources) would much exhibit higher levels of WR.

2.5.1 Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) is one of the generic competencies that could influence the work readiness of final-year students. In this section, a brief history and definition of EI are provided, as well as a discussion of different EI models.

The study of EI originates from the writings of Wechsler (1940), who referred to the non-cognitive intellectual aspects of general intelligence. He defined intelligence as the "the aggregate of global capacity of the individual to act purposefully, to think rationally, and to deal effectively with his or her environment (Wechsler, as cited in Prins, Van Niekerk and Weyers, 2011, p. 47).

Wechsler's ideas were followed by Gardner (1983), who proposed a theory of multiple types of intelligence that included forms of cognitive intelligence, musical and personal intelligence (Prins et al., 2011). Gardner (1983) conceptualised intelligence as an intra-psychic capacity and an interpersonal skill. Intrapersonal intelligence assists one to act in ways that are appropriate to one's needs, goals and abilities, while interpersonal intelligence includes the ability to observe moods, desires and intentions of others and to act on these observations (Gardner, 1983). It was after this period that researchers began to challenge the traditional IQ-based view of intelligence. More recently, the concept of EI has emerged, adding depth to the concept of human intelligence (Prins et al., 2011). According to Prins et al. (2011), Bar-On was the first researcher to use the abbreviation EQ for "emotional quotient" in the 1980s, and in the 1990s, Salovey and Mayer published what they referred to as "a landmark conceptualisation of emotional intelligence" and in 1995, Goleman published his writings which became a popular book on emotional intelligence.

Literature distinguishes between ability-based models (Ashkansy & Daus, 2005; Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2008) and skill-based models (Petrides, 2010), which differ in their conceptual approach toward the application of EI. The ability-based models emphasise the cognitive elements of EI and use a performance-based assessment method to distinguish various levels of EI (Petrides, 2010). The skill-based model is trait-based and encompasses a broader set of competencies (Petrides, 2010). Trait EI concerns emotion-related self-perceptions measured via self-report. It is described as a constellation of self-perceptions located at the lower levels of the personality (Petrides, 2010).

Reddy, Haritha and Neerraja (2012, p. 27) define EI as "the capacity to effectively perceive, express, understand and manage emotions in a professional and effective manner at work". Bar-On (2010, p.57) defines EI "an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with an environmental demands and pressures". Many other definitions of EI (Goleman, 1995; Mayer et al., 2008; Salovey & Mayer, 1990) all share similar theoretical underpinnings, which include an awareness of one's own emotions, an awareness of emotions in others, an understanding of emotions, and the ability to manage one's own emotions and the emotions of others. There are three major models of EI:

- Salovey and Mayer (1990) describe EI as the ability to perceive, understand, manage and use emotions to facilitate thinking. Their interpretation of EI led to the development of the Mayer–Salovey–Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT).

- Goleman (1995) views EI as an assortment of various competencies and skills that contribute to successful managerial performance. This model can be regarded as a mixed model of EI.
- Bar-On (2010) developed a model of EI that describes EI as an array of interrelated emotional and social competencies and skills that affect intelligent behaviour (Spielberger as cited in Bar-On, 2010). The work of Bar-On culminated in the publication of the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (Bar-On-EQ-i). This EQ-i is a 133-item self-report inventory where participants are asked to indicate the degree to which the statements accurately describe them on a 5-point scale (Dawda & Hart, 2000).
- Palmer and Stough (2001) created the Swinburne Emotional Intelligence Test (SUEIT) with five dimensions of EI: emotional recognition and expression, understanding emotions external, emotions direct cognition, emotional management and emotional control. The SUEIT was subsequently developed into the Genos EI inventory (Gignac, 2008). The current research was based on the Genos model of EI, using the Genos EI inventory questionnaire (see par 3.5.1).

The Genos EI inventory questionnaire was originally conceptualised by Palmer and Stough at Swinburne University (2001). It was originally published as the Swinburne University Emotional Intelligence Test (SUIET) (Palmer & Stough, 2001). The SUIET has since been revised (Palmer, 2003) and is now widely used both in research and commercial settings as the Genos EI inventory. The Genos EI inventory is largely based on a factor analytical study aimed at determining a taxonomic model for the construct EI (Palmer, 2003). The Genos EI inventory is also based on factor analysis by Gignac (2005) of the SUIET (Palmer & Stough, 2001), an EI inventory identified by Palmer (2003). The Genos EI inventory comprises a general factor (total EI) as well as seven oblique factors (Gignac, 2005; Palmer, Stough, Harmer, & Gignac, 2009):

- *Emotional self-awareness (ESA)*: refers to the skill of perceiving and understanding own emotions. ESA measures the relative frequency with which an individual consciously identifies his/her emotions at work. This also represents the frequency with which an individual is aware that his/her emotions may motivate or affect his/her thoughts and behaviours at work.

- *Emotional expression (EE)*: refers to the skill of effectively expressing one's own emotions. This factor measures the relative frequency with which an individual expresses his/her emotions in an appropriate work. Appropriate, in this context, implies the right way, at the right time and to the right people.
- *Emotional awareness of others (EAO)*: refers to the skill of perceiving and understanding others' emotions. This factor measures the relative frequency with which an individual identifies the emotions expressed by others in the workplace. The emphasis is on the awareness of both verbal and non-verbal expressions by others.
- *Emotional reasoning (ER)*: refers to the skill of using emotional information in decision-making. ER measures the relative frequency with which an individual incorporates emotionally relevant information in the process of decision-making or problem solving at work. It should be noted, however, that this factor does not represent an anti-rationality disposition; instead, it was designed to measure a balanced approach to problem solving that incorporates some consideration of one's own emotions and the emotions of others when making decisions at work.
- *Emotional self-management (ESM)*: refers to the skill of managing one's own emotions. This factor measures the relative frequency with which an individual manages his/her emotions at work. Emphasis here is placed upon the successful adjustment to negative emotional states at work. ESM involves moving on from an emotional setback, rather than dwelling on or ruminating over situations.
- *Emotional management of others (EMO)*: EMO refers to the skill of positively influencing the emotions of others. This factor measures the relative frequency with which an individual manages the emotions of others at work successfully. This includes actions taken to motivate others, as well as demonstrations of modifying the emotions of others for their own personal betterment at work.
- *Emotional self-control (ESC)*: refers to the skill of effectively controlling own strong emotions. ESC measures the relative frequency with which an individual controls his/her strong emotions appropriately in the workplace. Focus is placed on the demonstrable maintenance of focus on the task at hand in the face of emotional adversity. Although similar to ESM, ESC incorporates an additional focus on the behavioural demonstrations of controlling intense reactive emotions at work, such as anger.

The Genos total EI is based on an equally weighted composite of the seven Genos EI dimensions (Gignac, 2008). The total EI score represents the frequency with which an individual engages in a diverse variety of EI behaviours relevant to the identification, reasoning with emotions and general management of the self and others (Gignac, 2008).

The Genos EI was designed specifically for use in the workplace as a learning and development aid for human resource professionals and occupational psychologists involved in the identification, selection and development of employees (Gignac, 2008). Genos EI does not measure EI per se; it rather measures how often people demonstrate 70 emotionally intelligent workplace behaviours that represent the effective demonstration of emotional intelligence in the workplace (Gignac, 2008).

In terms of measuring EI, authors in the era of EI distinguish between:

- ability measures designed to assess individual differences in emotional abilities (e.g. Mayer et al., 2000);
- skills measures, which are self- and rater-report or mixed measures designed to assess an array of emotional and social individual constructs, such as emotionally based competencies and personality traits measures designed to assess emotion-laden traits and dispositions (e.g. Petrides & Furnham, 2010); and
- self- and rater-report competency measures designed to measure individual differences in learned capabilities or skills based on emotional abilities.

All of these aforementioned approaches have their own merits and mounting evidence for psychometric reliability and validity (Palmer et al., 2009). However, despite this evidence of psychometric reliability and validity, the issue of practical utility has not been adequately addressed by many of the leading assessments (Palmer et al., 2009).

Palmer et al (2009) are of the opinion that leading EI assessments, such as the Mayer–Salovey–Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) and the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (Bar-On-EQ-i), lack validity related to the workplace, take too long to complete (133 items), and the model of EI it assesses is too complex, making it hard for practitioners to recall definitively during client debriefing sessions and debriefing in a timely manner. Palmer et al. (2009) further argue that a trait-based measure such as Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue), developed by Petrides and Furnham (2001), may also be considered too long (153 items), and it lacks face validity in that it is more concerned with individual preferences and styles than with what people actually do in the workplace.

Furthermore, Palmer et al. (2009) argue that trait-based measures of EI do not particularly lend themselves to multi-rater assessment formats, because a large number of the items concern internal attitudes, thoughts and preferences, rather than what individuals' demonstrably display to others.

There are three unique features of Genos EI worthy of note (Palmer et al., 2009). First, the taxonomic seven-factor model it assesses is simple in comparison to some of the larger models. This according to Palmer et al. (2009) makes it more straightforward to debrief, easier for participants to recall whilst undertaking their daily work, and easier to link to other organisational competency models. Second, it has validity related workplace items that represent emotionally intelligent workplace behaviours aligned to the seven factors of the Genos model. Finally, it is not a measure of EI, per se, but a measure of typical rather than maximal performance, specifically measuring individual differences in how often people demonstrate emotionally intelligent workplace behaviours (Palmer et al., 2009).

Palmer et al. (2009) hypothesize that these features help participants undertaking Genos EI to:

- understand the 'why' of what they are being asked to complete, which in turn creates greater participant buy-in; and
- appreciate the potential value of the information provided by the results of the inventory.

Developing EI as part of personal resources for graduates potential many benefits. In situations of great stress brought about by high job demands and low resources, the ability to manage emotions can help graduates to nurture positive emotions, avoid being overwhelmed by negative emotions, and cope with stress (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). In toxic work environments, such as where there are high interpersonal conflicts, regulating emotions is likely to influence the emotional valence of social interactions (Lopes et al., 2004), because we infer people's intentions from their emotional cues and use that information to guide our own behaviours (Lopes et al., 2004). This may also influence the quality of social interactions, because understanding emotional dynamics may help one to anticipate own and the other person's emotional reactions and thereby manage emotions effectively during an intense encounter (Lopes et al., 2004). The ability to manage emotions is also linked to workplace outcomes, for example Arefnasab et al. (2012) found a significant positive relationship between EI and problem-solving strategies.

EI has also been found to moderate the relationship between perception of the organisations politics and organisational commitment by changing the direction of relationship from negative into positive (Utami, Bangunb, & Lantuc, 2013). Employees with high EI have been found to have high organisational commitment even when they perceived a high political nature inside the organisation (Utami et al., 2013).

2.5.2 Psychological capital

The development of PsyCap is rooted in positive psychology, which was introduced by Martin Seligman in 1998. Seligman (1998) was a well-known researcher in the traditional negative approach to mental illness. Despite recognised accomplishments in finding effective treatment for mental illness and dysfunctional behaviour, psychology as a whole paid little attention to healthy individuals in terms of growth, development and self-actualisation (Luthans, 2002; Luthans, Youseff et al., 2007). A call by Seligman and others to redirect psychological research toward psychology's two forgotten missions of helping healthy people become happier and more productive and actualising human potential resulted in not only a surge of interest but also a theory-building and empirical research, in what is known as positive psychology (Luthans, 2002, Luthans, Youseff et al., 2007).

Positive psychology bases its conclusions on science rather than philosophy, rhetoric, conventional wisdom, gurus or personal opinion (Luthans, 2002, Luthans, Youseff et al., 2007). This scientific base has become a prerequisite for proposed application of positivity to the workplace (Luthans, 2002; Luthans, Youseff et al., 2007). Besides positive psychology, organisational theory and behaviour scholars have recently recognised the untapped potential of a science-based, positively orientated approach, which has resulted in two major parallel and complementary movements. These are commonly referred to as positive organisational scholarship (POS), arising from researchers at the University of Michigan, and positive organisational behaviour (POB) arising from researchers from at the University of Nebraska's Gallup Leadership Institute (Luthans, 2002; Luthans, Youseff et al., 2007). According to Cameron, Dutton and Quinn (2003), POS is concerned with the study of positive outcomes, processes and attributes of organisations and their members. In essence, it seeks to understand human excellence and exceptional organisational performance. The focus of POS is on dynamics that are typically described in words such as 'excellence', 'thriving', 'flourishing', 'resilience' or 'virtuousness' (Cameron et al., 2003). It focuses on the enabler, the motivations and the outcomes of effects associated with positive phenomena (Cameron et al., 2003).

POB was first defined as “the study and application of positively orientated human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed, and effectively managed for performance improvement in today’s workplace (Luthans, 2002, p. 59).

These two approaches complement each other, but POS tends to focus on the macro, organisational level, while POB concentrates on the micro, individual level (Luthans, 2002). Other distinguishing features are that POS deals with constructs such as compassion and virtuousness, which may or may not be open to development and/or relate to performance impact (Luthans, 2002), while to be included in POB, the construct must meet the criteria of being state-like, thus open to development and related to performance outcomes (Luthans, 2002). PsyCap is derived from the POB foundation and criteria (Luthans, Youseff et al., 2007). Since the establishment of POB, several positive psychological capacities have been considered for inclusion, studied and empirically tested in the context of the workplace (Luthans, Youseff et al., 2007). The four positive constructs that have been identified to meet the criteria of the definition of POB are hope, efficacy, optimism and resilience (Avey et al., 2008). When combined, these four constructs have been conceptually and empirically found to represent a second-order core factor called PsyCap (Avey et al., 2008).

PsyCap is defined by Luthans, Youseff et al. (2007, p. 3) as the “individual’s positive psychological state of development” and is characterised by

- having confidence (self-efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks;
- making a positive attributions (optimism) about succeeding now and in the future;
- persevering toward goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (hope) in order to succeed; and
- when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resiliency) to attain success

PsyCap was founded on the theoretical frameworks of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986); hope theory (Snyder, 2000); resilience (Wagnild & Young, 1993), optimism (Scheier & Carver, 1985) and self-efficacy (Parker, 1998). The four dimensions of PsyCap include:

- **Self-efficacy**

Efficacy, a concept drawn from the theory of Bandura (1986) and applied to the workplace, can be defined as “the employee’s conviction of confidence about his or her abilities to mobilise the motivation, cognitive resources, or courses of action needed to successfully execute a specific task within a given context (Stajkovic & Luthans, as cited Demerouti, Van Euwijk, Snelder, & Wild, 2011). Self-efficacy is defined as “one’s confidence in his or her ability to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources and courses of action within a given context” (Demerouti et al., 2011, p. 62). Individuals who possess high self-efficacy are, according to Rego, Sousa, Marques and Cunha (2011), more likely to choose challenging tasks and endeavours and to apply their efforts and motivational resources to accomplish their goals and persevere in the face of obstacles and difficulties.

Self-efficacy is the belief that one has mastery over the events of one’s life and can meet challenges as they come up (Demerouti et al., 2011). Developing a competency of any kind strengthens the sense of self-efficacy, making a person more willing to take risks and seek out more demanding challenges and surmounting those challenges in turn increases the sense of self-efficacy (Goleman, 1995). This attitude makes people more likely to make the best use of whatever skills they may have or to do what it takes to develop such skills than those with low self efficacy (Goleman, 1995).

- **Optimism**

Under this perspective, those high in optimism characteristically expect success when faced with challenge. It is important to note that optimistic expectations in this case are an individual-level attribution. It is not likely that optimists expect organisational change efforts to be successful because of their optimism; rather, optimists tend to maintain positive expectations about what will happen to them personally throughout the change process (Avey et al., 2008).

Optimism involves attributing positive events to internal, permanent and pervasive causes, and negative events to external, temporary and situation-specific ones (Rego et al., 2012). Optimists are less likely to give up and more likely to have a more positive outlook on stressful situations, to experience positive emotions, to persevere when facing difficulties, to look for creative ways to solve problems and take advantage of opportunities (Demerouti et al., 2011) than pessimists.

Optimism, like hope, means having strong expectations that, in general, things will turn out all right in life, despite setbacks and frustrations (Demerouti et al., 2011). According to Goleman (1995), from the standpoint of EI, optimism is an attitude that buffers people against falling into apathy, hopelessness or depression in the face of tough going. Seligman (1998) describes optimism in terms of how people explain to themselves their successes and failures.

People who are optimistic see a failure as the result of something that can be changed so that they can succeed next time around, while pessimists take the blame for failure, ascribing to it some lasting profound implications for how people respond to life (Goleman, 1995).

- **Hope**

Snyder (2000, p.12) define hope as a “positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful (1) agency and (2) pathways”. People who are high in hope possess the uncanny ability to generate multiple pathways to accomplishing their goals (Demerouti et al., 2011). Hope is conceived as “being a motivational state that is based on the interaction between three factors: goals, agency and pathways” (Demerouti et al., 2011, p.62). People are driven to accomplish their goals by their sense of agency, which provides them with an internalised willpower to invest the time and energy necessary to achieve their goals (Demerouti et al., 2011) When hopeful individuals do not attain their goals, they use the feedback to improve goal pursuit thoughts and strategies, thus being more energetic and prone to look for alternative and creative ways to overcome obstacles (Rego et al., 2011). According to Toor and Ofori (2010), hopeful employees tend to be independent in their thought processes and possess an internal locus of control that helps them to be motivated.

According to Snyder (as cited in Goleman, 1995, p. 86), “students with high hope set themselves higher goals and know how to work hard to attain them. When you compare students of equivalent intellectual aptitude on their academic achievements what sets them apart is hope”. From the perspective of EI, having hope means that one will not give in to overwhelming anxiety or depression in the face of difficult challenges or setbacks (Goleman, 1995).

- **Resilience**

Luthans (2002, p. 702) defines resilience as a “positive psychological capacity to rebound, to bounce back from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure or even positive change progress and increased responsibility”. At the core of this capacity is the ability to bounce back and beyond from setbacks and positively coping and adapting to significant changes (Luthans, 2002). Resilient employees are those who have the ability to adapt positively and thrive in any very challenging circumstances such as those found in most organisations (Luthans, 2002).

Resilience can be described as the capacity to bounce back from adversity, uncertainty, failure, or even positive but seemingly overwhelming changes (Luthans, 2002). Resilience enhances positive abilities and reduces the fear factors within individuals, thus putting them in a better position to bounce back from difficult circumstances (Toor & Ofori, 2010). Resilience is defined as “the capability of individuals to cope successfully in the face of significant change, adversity or risk. This capability changes over time and is enhanced by protective factors in the individual and environment” (Luthans, 2002, p. 702).

Developing PsyCap as part of personal resources for graduates could have benefits which may improve on their performance. When graduates are going through difficult periods of change, such as the transitional period from university to work, a strong PsyCap may contribute to a smooth transition. Gooty et al. (2009) found that the people with high levels of PsyCap are more able than those with low levels of PsyCap to move forward when faced with everyday work hassles. Rottinghaus, Day, and Borgen (2005) found a positive relationship between optimism and adaptability. This may be essential for adapting in a new work environment and culture. PsyCap as a personal resource can be implemented to enhance attitudinal outcomes such as work engagement and organisational commitment (Rottinghaus et al., 2005). According to Simons and Buitendach (2013), higher levels of PsyCap are associated with higher levels of work engagement and organisational commitment. PsyCap has been conceptually and empirically demonstrated to be related to employee performance, has been linked to work outcomes such as performance and extra role behaviours (Peterson, Luthans, Avolio, Walumba, & Zhang, 2011). Evidence of the positive role of PsyCap in work performance was also found by Toor and Ofori (2010).

Research indicates that the overall core construct of PsyCap better relates to these outcomes than the individual constructs that make it up (Avey et al., 2008).

The above-mentioned indicates that employees high in the four components making up PsyCap could have a variety of positive psychological resources to draw from in order to cope with the challenges of organisational change (Avey et al., 2008). Research on PsyCap among graduates indicates that graduates who possess PsyCap and engage in behaviours, such as socialising and job-seeking information, consistently reported higher feelings of adjustment in terms of self-rated job performance, job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Larson, 2013).

2.5.3 Sense of coherence

According to Strumpfer (1990) Antonovsky (1979) introduced the concept of generalised resistance resources (GRRs) that can facilitate effective tension management in any situation of demand. He described a range of these GRRs, including physical and biochemical resources, artefactual–material resources, emotional resources and macro-sociocultural resources (Strumpfer, 1990). According to Antonovsky as cited in Strumpfer, 1990), all GRRs have in common that they facilitate making sense out of the countless stressors with which we are constantly bombarded, and it is through these repeated experiences of such sense making that a strong SOC develops over time.

SOC is embedded in the salutogenic orientation, which differs from the pathogenic orientation (Antonovsky, 1987). The pathogenic orientation is concerned with understanding why people fall ill and more specifically, why they develop particular disease entities (Antonovsky, 1987). Such understanding is then used to find ways of combating and preventing each of the diseases in turn (Antonovsky, 1987). The assumption is that diseases are caused by physical, biochemical, microbiological and psychosocial agents (Strumpfer, 1990). A salutogenic orientation focuses on the origins of health (Antonovsky, 1987). It poses a radically different question: why are people located toward the positive end of the health ease/dis-ease continuum, or why do they move toward this end (Antonovsky, 1987). The health-orientated emphasis or the traditional medical disease-orientated position is based on the perception of a fundamental dichotomy between healthy and sick people (Antonovsky, 1987). Those who subscribe to the former position would focus their attention and resources on keeping people healthy, and preventing them from becoming sick. Those who take the latter stance focus on treating those who are sick, seeking to prevent death and chronicity and to restore health if possible (Antonovsky, 1987). The salutogenic orientation proposes that we study the location of each person, at any time, on this continuum. This orientation leads one to think in terms of factors promoting movement towards the healthy end of the continuum (Antonovsky, 1987).

Antonovsky's SOC theory relates to resources, mechanisms and interactions involved in the adjustment capacity of humans. SOC is a theoretical construct that has its origins in Antonovsky's interest in salutogenesis (Loyttyniemi, Virtanen, & Rantalaaho, 2004). The salutogenesis paradigm focuses on the resources and strategies that are order-restoring and which enable successful coping with potentially pathogenic factors encountered in life (Korotkov, as cited in Griffiths et al., 2011). It is a major determinant of maintaining one's position on the health ease/dis-ease continuum and of movement toward the healthy end (Antonovsky, 1986). SOC is defined as –

a global orientation that expresses the extent to which one has a (1) pervasive, enduring though dynamic feeling of confidence that stimuli deriving from one's internal and external environments in the course of living are structured, predictable and explicable, (2) the resources are available to one to offset the demands posed by these stimuli and, (3) these demands are challenges, worthy of investment and engagement (Antonovsky, 1993, p. 725)

The concept of SOC was developed from considering how stressors affect a person's health and physical wellbeing (Antonovsky, 1986, 1993). It forms part of the salutogenic paradigm that aims to understand how people live well and remain healthy despite exposure to stressors (Antonovsky, 1987, 1993).

Generally, SOC can be regarded as a broad individual attribute that influences the way people perceive and interpret events (Johnston et al., 2013). This ability to perceive and interpret events is important for graduates, and even more so when experiencing a new work environment or dealing with the shock of unmet expectations. SOC is not a personality trait or a specific coping strategy; rather, a general orientation that provides a basis for successful coping (Johnston et al., 2013) and because it develops from one's life experiences, McCrae and Costa (1994) argue that it can change over time.

The core hypothesis of the concept is that the stronger the person's SOC, the more adequate his or her capacity will be to cope with psychological stressors in the work environment, as well as in private life (Antonovsky, 1987). This may be beneficial when graduates are faced with high job demands and a lack of resources. A strong SOC is associated with more self-efficacy, less learned helplessness, more hardiness and more internal locus of control (Smith & Meyers, as cited in Jellesma et al., 2011). Individuals with a strong SOC should be more capable of giving sense and structure to stressors (which cannot be avoided) in life than individuals with a weak SOC (Antonovsky, 1987).

Everyone faces challenges and setbacks in life. Success or failure in dealing with these depends on our ability to cope, and this ability depends on, according to Antonovsky's theory (1987), the strength of an individual's SOC (Griffiths et al., 2011). SOC consists of three interrelated dimensions: comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness (Antonovsky, 1987, 1993).

- **Comprehensibility**

Comprehensibility is the core facet of SOC (Antonovsky, 1986, 1993). It refers to the extent to which an individual perceives internal or external stimuli in a clear, ordered and structured way. This means that perceptions make cognitive sense.

- **Manageability**

Manageability describes a generalised expectancy of the individual about the availability of adequate resources to cope with a broad variety of demands (Antonovsky, 1986, 1993). These resources can be under personal control or under the control of a legitimate authority. The available resources may be under the person's own control or under the control of a legitimate other who has the power to resolve matters in his/her interest (Antonovsky, 1986, 1993).

- **Meaningfulness**

Meaningfulness is related to emotions and motivation (Antonovsky, 1986, 1993). It refers to the extent to which an individual believes that life makes sense (Antonovsky, 1986, 1993). It stresses the individual's investment in life and the belief that problems and demands are challenges worth investing activity and energy in. Having a strong SOC does not mean that the person views his/her entire world as comprehensible, manageable and meaningful. According to Strumpfer (1990), people set boundaries and what happens outside these boundaries does not trouble them.

Very few attempts have been made to enhance SOC. Langeland's studies (as cited in Davidson, Feldman, & Margalit, 2012) consisted of 16 weekly group meetings and homework for individuals with a variety of mental health difficulties. The programme emphasised participants' increased awareness of their own potential resources and their ability to use them (Davidson et al., 2012).

The programme appeared to increase the participants' SOC. The results confirmed that although SOC is considered stable, it can be enhanced (Davidson et al., 2012).

2.6 EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, SENSE OF COHERENCE, PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL AND WORK READINESS

The overall objective of this study was to investigate the theoretical and empirical relationship between EI, SOC, PsyCap and WR. The objective stemmed from the gap in literature, where, after consulting numerous research articles, it became evident that the relationship between EI, SOC and PsyCap and WR has not been explored despite numerous articles documenting the benefits of these variables and their contributions to performance. So far, the discussion in this chapter has focused on explaining the need to undertake this research. This section aims to summarise and bring together the points discussed thus far before embarking on a discussion of the proposed personal resources of EI, SOC and PsyCap.

WR, which formed the foundation of this research, is described as the extent to which graduates are perceived to possess certain attitudes and attributes that make them prepared for the work environment (Caballero et al., 2011; Chetty, n.d.; Harvey, 2001; Walsh & Kotzee, 2010; Yorke, 2006). In this study, it was argued that there are certain challenges that graduates may experience that may affect their levels of WR. These challenges may be personal, referring to the challenges graduates experience during the transition period from university to work (see par 2.2.2), and those associated with being in a particular life and career stage (see par 2.2.3) or which are work environment-related, referring to certain contextual factors in the work environment (see par 2.2.1) that may contribute to affecting WR levels of graduates and, subsequently, their employability.

In this study, WR was considered to influence graduates' employability. According to Chetty (n.d.), employability is described as the capacity of graduates to enter national and international workspace, and this means that the more work ready the graduates are, the more likely they are to be employed. Literature on the kind of skills and attributes that contribute to WR distinguishes between generic and core skills.

Core skills, also referred to as key or field-specific competencies, refers knowledge and skills that are relevant for the types of jobs for which an educational programme prepares a student (Barrie, 2006; Coopers & Lybrand, 1998; Hager et al., 2002; Lowden et al., 2011; Smith & Kruger, 2008) while generic skills are not job-specific (Barrie, 2006; Coopers & Lybrand, 1998; Hager et al., 2002; Lowden et al., 2011; Smith & Kruger, 2008). Generic skills cut across all industries and jobs from entry-level workers to senior officers and are considered essential for effective performance in the workplace (Singh & Singh, 2008). Various models have been developed with the intention of capturing the elusive concept of employability. The most relevant to this study is the model of Pool and Sewell (2007), who makes a case for the inclusion of intrapersonal factors, such as EI, in the employability model. The main argument of this research was that the challenges experienced by graduates that can be managed and dealt with by the development of certain personal resources.

2.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Different personal and work environment-related factors such as going through the transition period from university to work and dealing with toxic work environments and interpersonal conflicts can have an effect on the extent to which a graduate is considered to be work ready. In reviewing theory, there was evidence which indicated that personal resources can play an essential role in reducing the effect of the outcomes of personal and work-related challenges. The literature review was dedicated to theoretically presenting the role that EI, SOC and PsyCap can play as personal resources in assisting graduates to be more work ready.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 formed the theoretical foundation and framework for the hypotheses outlined in this chapter. In this chapter, the hypotheses as well as the research design, the sampling design, measuring instruments and statistical analysis will be discussed. Before engaging in a discussion about the research design and methodology of this study, it is important to create an understanding of research and why it is carried out.

Research implies the systematisation of knowledge, in which philosophy, common sense, personal beliefs, biases, emotions, speculation, incorrect theories, perceptions, assumptions and hypothesis are tested in objective ways (Bergh & Theron, 2009). Thus, scientific research is defined “as an objective, empirical and logical activity in which scientists through logical and empirical procedures, endeavour to establish theories and facts that can stand for the truth” (Bergh & Theron, 2009, p. 435).

The research process consists of the following stages: formulating a testable hypothesis, designing the study, collecting data, conducting data analyses and drawing conclusions (Babbie, 2010; Berg & Theron, 2009; Coetzee & Schreuder, 2010; Durrheim, 2006; Weiten, 2013). A research design is a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution or implementation of the research (Durrheim, 2006). In essence, a research design is the plan that guides the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data (Durrheim, 2006). Research methodology consists of all the various approaches to the observation, measurement, manipulation and control of variables in empirical studies (Weiten, 2013). Research can be quantitative, qualitative or a combination (Babbie, 2010). Qualitative research is a “non-numerical examination and interpretation of observations for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships” (Babbie, 2010, p. 394). The design of this study was quantitative. Quantitative research is the numerical representation and manipulation of observations for the purpose of describing and explaining the phenomena that those observations reflect (Babbie, 2010, p. 422). Given that there is a lack of research which investigates the variables under study, this research can be regarded as an exploratory study. Exploratory research is normally carried out when the researcher examines a new interest or when the subject of study is relatively new (Babbie, 2010).

Due to the limited published research on the relationship between EI, SOC, PsyCap and work readiness of final-year university students, this study aimed to generate more specific research questions that could be addressed in future studies.

3.2 HYPOTHESES

The review of literature in Chapter 2 highlighted the significant contribution of EI, SOC and PsyCap on the wellbeing and subsequently the performance of individuals within the work environment. The need therefore existed to investigate how these factors may contribute to the work readiness of graduates. Theorising the challenges that graduates face (see par 2.2), the study aimed to present a theoretical proposition that would serve to conceptualise EI, SOC, PsyCap and WR. One of the aims of the study was to investigate the empirical relationship between the variables. In order to satisfy this research objectives (see par 1.4), the following hypotheses were formulated to investigate the hypothesised relationships between the subscales of EI, SOC, PsyCap and the subscales of WR (see Figure 1.1).

For the sake of simplicity and for practical reasons (reducing the number of pages), in this research report, the hypotheses are presented in groups. All the proposed relationships between one subscale of EI and the four subscales of WR are grouped together.

Hypotheses 1–4: There is a significant positive relationship between emotional self-awareness and personal work characteristics, organisational acumen, work competence and social intelligence respectively.

Hypotheses 5–8: There is a significant positive relationship between emotional expression and personal work characteristics, organisational acumen, work competence and social intelligence respectively.

Hypotheses 9–12: There is a significant positive relationship between emotional awareness of others and personal work characteristics, organisational acumen, work competence and social intelligence respectively.

Hypotheses 13–16: There is a significant positive relationship between emotional reasoning and work readiness and personal work characteristics, organisational acumen, work competence and social intelligence respectively.

Hypotheses 17–20: There is a significant positive relationship between emotional self-management and personal work characteristics, organisational acumen, work competence and social intelligence respectively.

Hypotheses 21–24: There is a significant positive relationship between emotional management of others and personal work characteristics, organisational acumen, work competence and social intelligence respectively.

Hypotheses 25–28: There is a significant positive relationship between emotional self-control and personal work characteristics, organisational acumen, work competence and social intelligence respectively.

Hypotheses 29–32: There is a significant positive relationship between efficacy and personal work characteristics, organisational acumen, work competence and social intelligence respectively.

Hypotheses 33–36: There is a significant positive relationship between hope and personal work characteristics, organisational acumen, work competence and social intelligence respectively.

Hypotheses 37–40: There is a significant positive relationship between resilience and personal work characteristics, organisational acumen, work competence and social intelligence respectively.

Hypotheses 41–44: There is a significant positive relationship between optimism and personal work characteristics, organisational acumen, work competence and social intelligence respectively.

Hypotheses 45–48: There is a significant positive relationship between meaning and personal work characteristics, organisational acumen, work competence and social intelligence respectively.

Hypotheses 49–52: There is a significant positive relationship between comprehensibility and personal work characteristics, organisational acumen, work competence and social intelligence respectively.

Hypotheses 53–56: There is a significant positive relationship between manageability and personal work characteristics, organisational acumen, work competence and social intelligence respectively.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is a “strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution or implementation of the research” (Durrheim, 2006, p. 34).

In this study, a non-experimental research design was used to explore the relationships between the variables. Non-experimental research is a descriptive type of research where the goal is to attempt to provide an accurate description or picture of a particular situation or variable (Coetzee & Schreuder, 2010).

The current study was exploratory in nature. According to Durrheim (2006), exploratory research is undertaken to make preliminary investigations into relatively unknown areas of research. Because of the lack of control over research variables, the study adopted an *ex post facto* design to investigate the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. An *ex post facto* study observes an empirical relationship between two variables and thereafter suggests a reason for that relationship (Babbie, 2010). The independent variable is the variable that the experimenter manipulates to determine its effects on the dependent variable (Durrheim, 2006; Weiten, 2013). The independent variables for this study were EI, SOC and PsyCap. A dependent variable is a variable that is thought to be affected by the manipulation of the independent variable (Durrheim, 2006; Weiten 2013). The dependent variable for this study was WR.

3.4 SAMPLING DESIGN

A sampling design reflects the selection of research participants from an entire population, and involves decisions about which people, settings, events, behaviours and/or social processes to observe (Durrheim, 2006). According to Babbie and Mouton (1998), a population is described as the group being studied and from which conclusions will be drawn. The population for this study was university students. A sample of final-year students was drawn from three participating universities.

A total sample of 183 (106 females and 77 males), was drawn from Makerere University and the University of Venda, using a convenience sampling method. Convenience sampling or reliance on available subject method is a non-probability sampling method where the participants are selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher (Babbie, 2010). The advantages of this method include the availability and willingness to respond to questionnaires by the sample. The convenience sampling is considered to be an easy and feasible method of sampling (Babbie, 2010). This method should be used with caution by researchers as it limits generalisation (Babbie, 2010).

3.5 MEASURING INSTRUMENTS

In order to assess the relationship between EI, SOC, PsyCap and the work readiness of final-year students, the following instruments were used. EI was measured using the Genos EI self-assessment inventory (Gignac, 2008). PsyCap was measured using the PCQ-24 self-rater inventory (Luthans, Avolio et al., 2007). SOC was measured using the OLQ-13 inventory (Antonovsky, 1993). The work readiness of the final university year students was measured using the Work Readiness Scale (Caballero et al., 2011).

3.5.1 Genos EI self-assessment inventory

Gignac (2010, p.132) defines EI as “the ability to purposefully adapt, shape and select environments through the use of emotionally relevant processes”. The Genos EI inventory consists of 70 items designed to measure EI across seven dimensions (Gignac, 2008). The 70-item questionnaire may take respondents approximately 12–15 minutes to complete. Each of the seven factors of the Genos EI model is measured by ten homogeneous emotionally intelligent workplace behaviours. Participants are asked to indicate on an anchored rating scale from 1–5, how often the behaviour in question is demonstrated (where 1=Almost Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, and 5=Almost Always) (Gignac, 2008).

The seven subscales of the Genos EI include: (a) Emotional awareness, (b) Emotional expression, (c) Emotional awareness of others, (d) Emotional reasoning, (e) Emotional self-management, (f) Emotional management of others, and (g) Emotional self-control (see par 2.5.1). The items in Genos EI also concern a range of different positive and negative emotions. Positive emotions include: satisfaction, enthusiasm, optimism, excitement, engagement, motivation, and feeling valued by colleagues. Negative emotions include: anxiety, anger, stress, annoyance, frustration, being disappointed, upset and impatient (Gignac, 2008 p. 109).

The EI inventory shows respectable levels of internal consistency reliability. The internal consistency reliability of the Genos EI self-report inventory has been examined with large workplace samples across a variety of nationalities. Gignac (2008) reported mean subscale reliabilities ranging from .71 to .85 across five nationalities (American, Australian, Asian, Indian and South African), and an internal consistency reliability score of .96. Based on these findings, it may be suggested that Genos EI inventory scores are associated with acceptable levels of internal consistency reliability (Gignac, 2008).

3.5.2 Psychological capital questionnaire (PCQ-24)

PsyCap was measured using the PCQ-24 self-rater questionnaire. Luthans, Youseff et al. (2007, p. 3) define PsyCap as the “individual’s positive psychological state of development” and is characterised by having confidence (self-efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks; making a positive attributions (optimism) about succeeding now and in the future; persevering toward goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (hope) in order to succeed; and when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resiliency) to attain success

The PCQ-24 consists of a total of 24 items, divided into four subscales, with six items per subscale (Luthans, Avolio et al., 2007): (a) hope, (b) efficacy, (c) resilience and (d) optimism (see par 2.5.2). The items are measured on a six-point Likert-type scale with response options ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree”. The subscales were drawn from established and tested scales. The hope items were adapted from Snyder et al.’s (1996) State Hope Scale, optimism items were adapted from Scheier and Carver’s (1998) Measure of Optimism, the self-efficacy items were adapted from Parker’s (1998) measure of self-efficacy in the workplace, and resilience was adapted from Wagnild and Young’s (1993) Resilience Scale. Reliability estimates of the four scales ranged from $\alpha=.72$ to $\alpha=.87$. The total PsyCap coefficient alpha reliability was estimated at $\alpha=.91$ (Luthans, Avolio et al, 2007).

3.5.3 Sense of coherence, orientation to life questionnaire (OLQ)

SOC was measured using the OLQ questionnaire which consists of 13 items rated on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from “Total Disagreement” to “Total Agreement” (Antonovsky, 1993). The OLQ 13 Item is an abbreviated form of the original test.

SOC is defined as a global orientation that expresses the extent to which one has a (1) pervasive, enduring though dynamic feeling of confidence that stimuli deriving from one's internal and external environments in the course of living are structured, predictable and explicable, (2) the resources are available to one to offset the demands posed by these stimuli and, (3) these demands are challenges, worthy of investment and engagement (Antonovsky, 1993, p. 725)

The scale has three components, namely (a) comprehensibility, (b) manageability, and (c) meaningfulness (Antonovsky, 1993), see par 2.5.3). The 13 items in the scale include four items for measuring meaningfulness (Me), five items for measuring comprehensibility (CO) and four items for measuring manageability (Ma). Good internal consistency and reliability range from $\alpha=.86$ to $\alpha=.95$ (Antonovsky, 1993).

3.5.4. Work readiness scale (WRS)

WR was measured using the WR Scale developed by Caballero et al. (2011). Caballero and Walker (2010, p. 17) define work readiness (WR) as “the extent to which graduates are perceived to possess the attitudes and attributes that make them prepared or ready for success in the work environment”. The scale was developed to measure the generic competencies that assess the work readiness of graduates. The WRS is a recently developed scale which has not been extensively tested in literature; therefore, a brief background on the scale development is warranted.

The WRS was developed in two phases (Caballero et al., 2011). In phase one, a qualitative study was conducted to provide an understanding of and clarity regarding work readiness. Two separate samples (N=30) of participants were asked about their perceptions of work readiness and the various attributes and characteristics it comprises. The participating sample consisted of HR professionals and graduate students (Caballero et al., 2011). A thematic analysis was undertaken using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo 2.0 to create categories. A second researcher was also used to review the data and categories, and themes within categories. This phase resulted in the development of 10 final categories and underlying themes (see Appendix 1). In phase two, of the WRS, development positively and negatively worded items were used to avoid affirmation, acquiescence and agreeableness. An 11-point rating scale (0–11) was used ranging from “Completely Disagree” to “Completely Agree”. This wide range was used to allow for greater levels of variance. A total of 180 items were reviewed by HR experts and at the end of that process, 167 items were retained and placed in the questionnaire for a pilot of the scale.

A total of 2551 participants took part in the pilot study (graduate participants) represented across a range of disciplines. Scale refinement resulted in the deletion of a further 53 items (Caballero et al., 2011).

Exploratory factor analysis was used in Caballero et al.'s (2011) final analysis in order to provide a parsimonious solution of the data set. Scree plot and Kaiser–Guttman criteria (Eigen values greater than 3.0) were used to determine the number of items to retain (Caballero et al., 2011). Oblique rotation was used and the results of factor analysis produced a final solution with four factors that accounted for 47% of the variance shared among the remaining 64 items.

The final four factors included (a) Personal characteristics, which includes resilience and adaptability, and accounted for 14.1% of the variance, (b) Organisational acumen, which comprises the attributes of maturity, organisational awareness and professional development, and accounted for 16.1% of the variance, (c) Work competence includes problem solving, technical focus and motivation, and accounted for 7.7% of the variance, and (iv) Social intelligence, which includes interpersonal adaptability and orientation, and accounted for 8% of the variance (Caballero et al., 2011). Reliability analysis indicated that overall, the WRS had good internal consistency with a Cronbach alpha value of .96. The four factors also had good internal consistency with $\alpha=.93$ for Personal characteristics, $\alpha=.92$ for Organisational acumen, $\alpha=.90$ for Work competence and $\alpha=.88$ for Social intelligence (Caballero et al., 2011).

3.6 DATA COLLECTION

Before commencing with the research study, ethical clearance was obtained from the Stellenbosch University Ethics Committee (SUEC). Permission was also sought from the participating institutions by means of formal letters. After permission was granted the participants were approached to explain the purpose of the research. Participants were also ensured about the confidentiality of the research. All ethical requirements as stipulated by the SUEC and the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) (Chapter 10) were strictly adhered to. Participation was voluntary and withdrawal from the study at any stage was accepted. The participants were also informed of this. Participants were required to complete a consent form to indicate their willingness to participate in the research process.

The research gathering process took place at an allocated venue at the different institutions. The participants gathered for a sit-down pencil and paper survey. Multiple sessions were organised to allow for maximum participation without interfering with the participants' schedules. At each gathering, the background and purpose of the research were explained to the participants. Thereafter, consent was sought from the participants using consent forms. After consenting to partake in the study, questionnaires were distributed for completion, which took a maximum of 60 minutes.

3.7 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

STATISTICA 10 was used to conduct the analysis of the data. Descriptive statistics of the sample as well as of the different factors were calculated to provide an overview of the sample. Correlation analysis was computed to test the hypothesis (see par 3.2). In this study, Spearman's correlation coefficient was used. Multiple regression analysis, which Babbie (2010) describes as form of statistical analysis that seeks the equation representing the impact two or more independent variables on a single variable, was used to determine which independent variables best predicted WR.

3.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, the hypotheses developed for the study were discussed. The research methodology, research design, sample as well as the measuring instruments were also discussed. Lastly, an overview of the statistical analysis was provided. The results of the study are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 dealt with the theoretical relationship between the variables. The aim of Chapter 2 was to satisfy the theoretical objective (see par 1.4.1) and provide theoretical background for the hypothesised relationships between the EI, SOC, PsyCap and WR (see par 3.2). In this chapter, the assessed empirical relationships between variables will be discussed. The aim is to provide answers to the research questions (see par 1.2) and to satisfy the research objectives (see par 1.4) by testing the formulated hypotheses. The results of the various statistical analyses are presented in this chapter. The results are presented by reporting on the descriptive statistics of the sample, followed by a report on the internal reliability analysis of the different scales. The report on inferential statistics will include a report on observed correlations between the variables as hypothesised by using Spearman's correlation coefficient, followed by multiple regression analyses to obtain a significant model. The analysis in this study was done using STATISTICA 10.

4.2 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR THE SAMPLE

Descriptive statistics are statistical computations describing either the characteristics of a sample or the relationships among variables (Babbie, 2010). They provide a summary of sample observations (Babbie, 2010). Participants in this study were 183 students from three universities. The sample comprised of 106 (58%) females and 77(42%) males. Participants were aged between 20 years and 40 years, with the majority of the participants (71%) between the ages of 20 and 25. Of the participants, 25% were between the ages 26 and 30, 3% between the ages of 31 and 35, and 2% of the participants were between the ages of 36 and 40. The majority of the participants (60%) were from South Africa and the remaining 40% from Uganda. Of the participants, 85% were busy with their final year of undergraduate studies at the time of the study (2014–2014), while 15% of the participants were in their final year of postgraduates studies. Since the convenience sampling method was used, the participants in all the participating universities were from different faculties and departments.

4.3 INTERNAL RELIABILITY ANALYSIS OF THE SCALES

The four instruments (Genos EI inventory, PCQ-24, OLQ & WRS) utilised in this study were reported in the research literature review as having acceptable internal consistency (see par 3.5). Item analysis was performed to test the reliability of the scales. According to Babbie (2010), item analysis is an assessment of each item included in a composite measure to investigate whether the item makes an independent contribution or whether it merely duplicates the contribution of other items in the measure. The different scales were analysed in order to flag items that indicated a lack of or low internal consistency, and to delete these items if their deletion would make significant improvement on the Cronbach alpha. An alpha of α (>0.70) is considered acceptable for research purposes. It is important to note that Cronbach alphas are sensitive to the number of items in a scale, more so if the scale contains fewer than ten items, in which case, Cronbach values of .50 can be expected (Pallant, 2007). The following results were found:

- Items E11 (.06), E9 (.14), E25 (.03), E67 (-.03), E5 (.1), E26 (-.6) in the Genos EI inventory were flagged as possible poor items. The items were flagged as poor because they indicated poor inter-item reliability and some instances correlated negatively with other items (e.g. items E67 and E26). The possible reason for items E5, E9, E11, E26 and E67 to reflect poorly could be that they were negative items which required reverse scoring. Deleting items E11, E9, E25 and E5 would result in a marginal increase in the alpha; as a result, these items were retained. Item E67 had a negative inter-item correlation (-.36) in comparison to other items in the subscale. Furthermore, the results indicated that the deletion of item E67 would have a sizeable increase in the alpha, from .53 to .64, which means that deleting this item would reasonably increase the scale's internal consistency. Item E26 had the lowest and negative inter-item correlation (-0.06). Deleting this item would result in a reasonable increase in the alpha from .54 to .60. Although deleting these items would have a significant effect on the internal consistency of the scale, a decision was made to retain items E67 and E26 for further analysis.
- Items 13 ("When I have a setback at work, I have trouble recovering from it and moving on") and item 20 ("If something can go wrong for me workwise it will") from the PsyCap PCQ-24 self-rater were flagged as poor items. This could possibly be due to the items requiring reverse scoring. Deleting item 13 did not result in any significant increase in the alpha (from .56 to .57); therefore, this item was retained.

- Deleting item 20 would have resulted in significant increase in the alpha, from .56 to .63; however, it was decided to retain this item for further analysis.

The decision to retain items that would, if deleted, improve the internal consistency of the same was made because of the purpose to the study, which was not to assess the internal consistency of the scales used, but to utilise the scales in their original form to assess the hypothesised relationships.

The internal reliability of the subscales is presented in Table 4.1, followed by a discussion on the reliability coefficients for the different subscales.

Table 4.1
Internal Reliability of Subscales

| Subscales | α |
|---|----------------------------|
| Genos EI self-assessment inventory: | |
| Emotional self-awareness | .71 |
| Emotional expression | .57 |
| Emotional awareness of others | .65 |
| Emotional reasoning | .53 |
| Emotional self-management | .54 |
| Emotional management of others | .69 |
| Emotional self-control | .63 |
| PsyCap PCQ-24 self-rater: | |
| Efficacy | .77 |
| Hope | .77 |
| Resilience | .55 |
| Optimism | .51 |
| SOC orientation to life questionnaire (OLQ): | |
| Meaningfulness | .51 |
| Comprehensibility | .61 |
| Manageability | .40 |
| Work readiness scale: | |
| Personal work characteristics | .82 |
| Organisational acumen | .94 |
| Work competence | .92 |
| Social intelligence | .89 |

The results of the internal reliability of the subscales in Table 4.1 indicate that the subscales of the Genos EI self-assessment inventory used to measure EI yielded reasonable reliability coefficients ranging from .53 to .71. Although some subscales, such as emotional reasoning and emotional self-management, yielded lower alphas (.53 & .54 respectively), it was decided to keep these scales for further statistical analysis.

The subscales of the PsyCap PCQ-24 self-rater used to measure PsyCap, yielded reasonably significant alphas with the exception of resilience and optimism (.55 and .51 respectively). It was however decided to keep these scales for further statistical analysis. The results of the analysis of the OLQ used to measure SOC, yielded reasonable alphas with the exception of the manageability subscale (.40). This scale was retained for further analysis. The subscales of the WRS used to measure work readiness yielded significant reliability coefficients from .82 to .94.

4.4 INFERENCE STATISTICS

Inferential statistics are defined as “the body of statistical computations relevant to making inferences from findings based on sample observations to some larger population (Babbie, 2010, p. 476). In essence, inferential statistics enable a researcher to draw conclusions on the behaviour of a large population based on the findings of the study (Coetzee & Schreuder, 2010). They are also instrumental in confirming or rejecting predictions (Field, 2009).

4.4.1 Correlations

In this section of the study, the results of the inter-correlations as hypothesised in par 3.2 and Figure 1.1 are discussed. The relationships between the constructs were investigated using Spearman’s correlation. Correlation coefficients were observed to determine the direction (negative or positive) of the relationship and the magnitude (the index of the strength of the relationship) between two or more variables (Babbie, 2010; Coetzee & Schreuder, 2010). Correlation coefficients of .70 to 1.00 are regarded as high correlations and are considered to be the most preferred. Correlations of .40 to .69 are moderately high and they are considered as acceptable, while correlations of .20 to .39 are regarded as low. Any correlation below .20 is regarded as negligible (Coetzee & Schreuder, 2010). For the purpose of the current study, hypotheses with low, moderate and higher correlations were accepted and hypothesis with correlations below .20 (that is correlations between .00 and .19) were rejected. Correlation between the subscales of the independent variables (EI, SOC and PsyCap) and subscales of the dependent variable (WR) were evaluated, the results are depicted in Table 4.2, Table 4.3 and Table 4.4, respectively, followed by summary discussions.

Table 4.2
Correlations Between Subscales of EI and Subscales of WR

| Independent variables | Dependent variable | Spearman r | p |
|---|--------------------|------------|-----|
| Emotional self-awareness(ESA) | PWC | -.29 | .00 |
| Emotional self-awareness(ESA) | OA | .30 | .00 |
| Emotional self-awareness(ESA) | WC | .19 | .01 |
| Emotional self-awareness(ESA) | SI | .12 | .11 |
| Emotional expression(EE) | PWC | -.37 | .00 |
| Emotional expression(EE) | OA | .37 | .00 |
| Emotional expression(EE) | WC | .33 | .00 |
| Emotional expression(EE) | SI | .25 | .00 |
| Emotional awareness of others(EAO) | PWC | -.35 | .00 |
| Emotional awareness of others(EAO) | OA | .33 | .00 |
| Emotional awareness of others(EAO) | WC | .29 | .00 |
| Emotional awareness of others(EAO) | SI | .19 | .01 |
| Emotional reasoning(ER) | PWC | -.23 | .00 |
| Emotional reasoning(ER) | OA | .20 | .01 |
| Emotional reasoning(ER) | WC | .28 | .00 |
| Emotional reasoning(ER) | SI | .23 | .00 |
| Emotional self-management(ESM) | PWC | -.36 | .00 |
| Emotional self-management(ESM) | OA | .42 | .00 |
| Emotional self-management(ESM) | WC | .37 | .00 |
| Emotional self-management(ESM) | SI | .29 | .00 |
| Emotional self-management of others(ESMO) | PWC | -.30 | .00 |
| Emotional self-management of others(ESMO) | OA | .23 | .00 |
| Emotional self-management of others(ESMO) | WC | .24 | .00 |
| Emotional self-management of others(ESMO) | SI | .26 | .00 |
| Emotional self-control(ESC) | PWC | -.38 | .00 |
| Emotional self-control(ESC) | OA | .29 | .00 |
| Emotional self-control(ESC) | WC | .24 | .00 |
| Emotional self-control(ESC) | SI | .13 | .08 |

Notes: PWC = personal work characteristics; OA = organisational acumen; WC = work competencies; SI = social intelligence

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between ESA and PWC.

The results in Table 4.2 show a low significant negative correlation between emotional self-awareness and personal work characteristics ($r = -.29$; $p = .00$) (see Figure 4.1). Based on the results, hypothesis 1 was rejected.

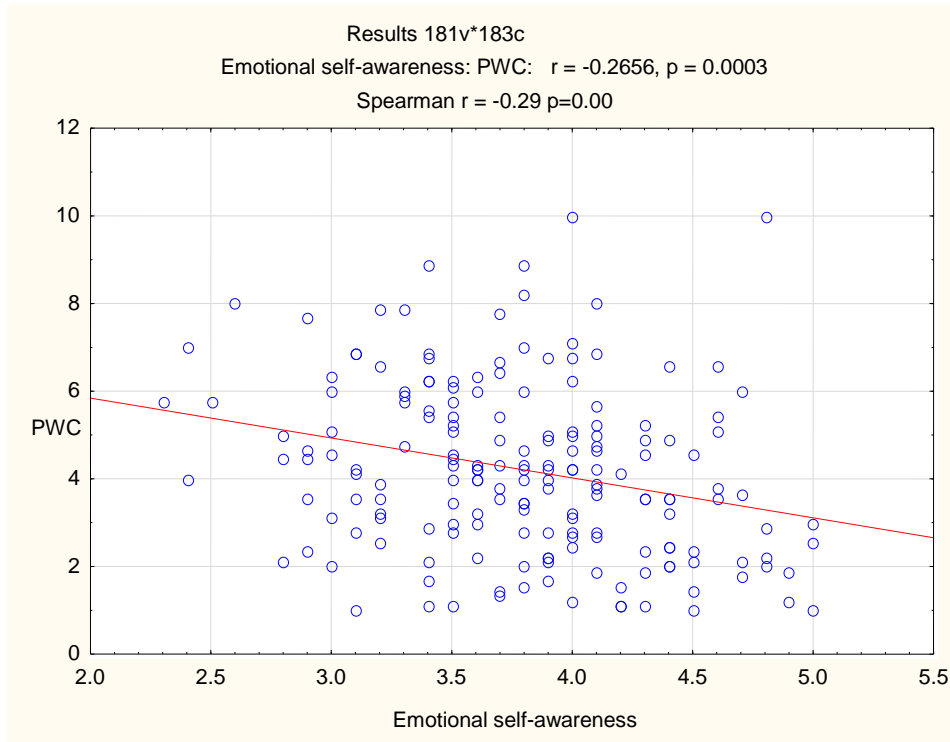


Figure 4.1 Relationship Between ESA and PWC

H2: There is a significant positive relationship between ESA and OA.

The results in Table 4.2 show a low significant positive correlation between emotional self-awareness and organisational acumen ($r = .30$; $p = .00$) (see Figure 4.2). Based on the results, hypothesis 2 was accepted.

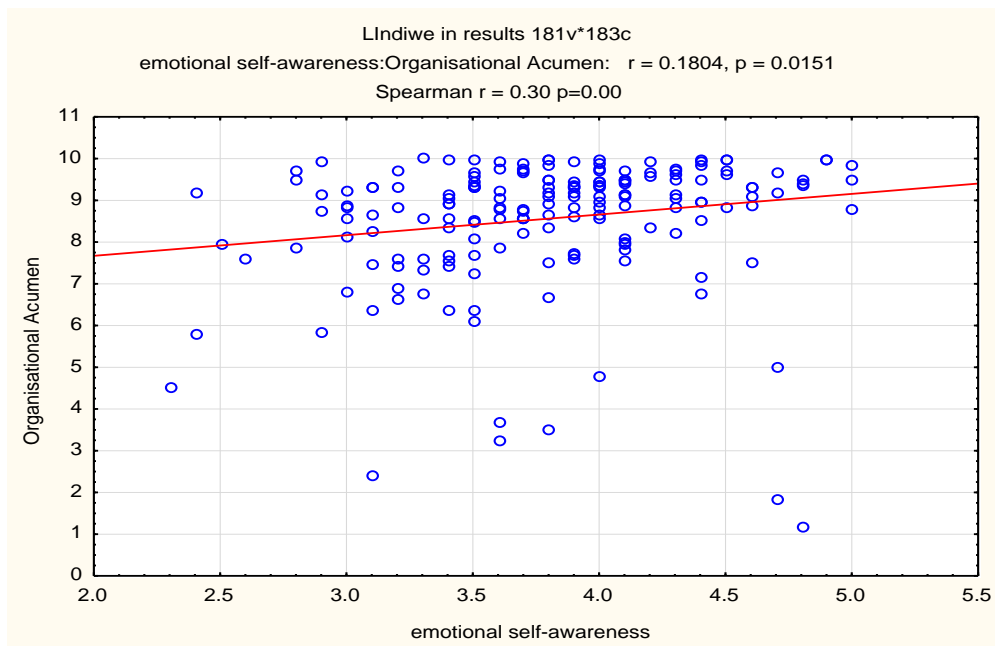


Figure 4.2 Relationship between ESA and OA

H3: There is a significant positive relationship between ESA and WC

The results of Table 4.2 show a negligible significant positive correlation between emotional self-awareness and work competence ($r=.19$; $p=.01$) (see Figure 4.3). Based on the results, hypothesis 3 was rejected.

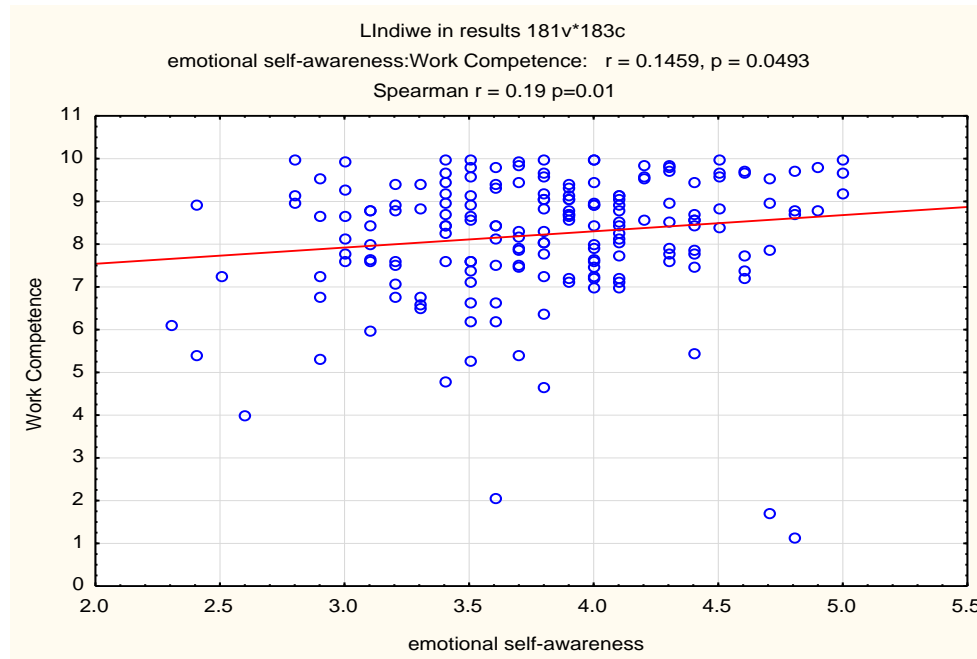


Figure 4.3 Relationship Between ESA and WC

H4: There is a significant positive relationship between ESA and SI

The results of Table 4.2 show a negligible insignificant positive correlation between emotional self-awareness and social intelligence ($r=.12$; $p=.11$) (see Figure 4.4). Based on the results, hypothesis 4 was rejected.

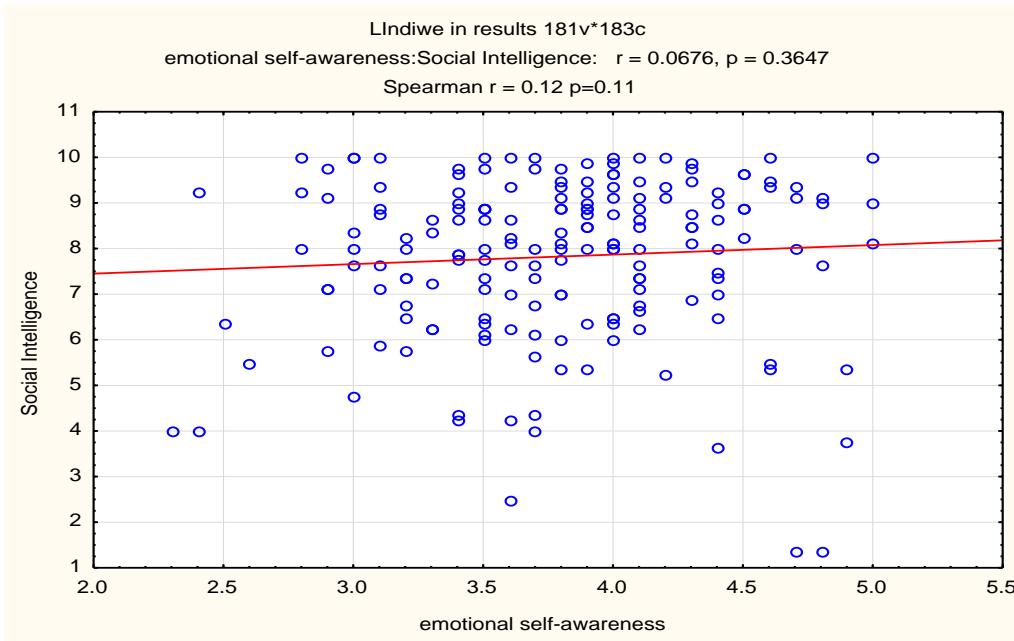


Figure 4.4 Relationship Between ESA and SI

H5: There is a significant positive relationship between EE and PWC.

The results of Table 4.2 show a low significant positive correlation between emotional expression and personal work characteristics ($r=-.37$; $p=.001$) (see Figure 4.5). Based on the results, hypothesis 5 was rejected.

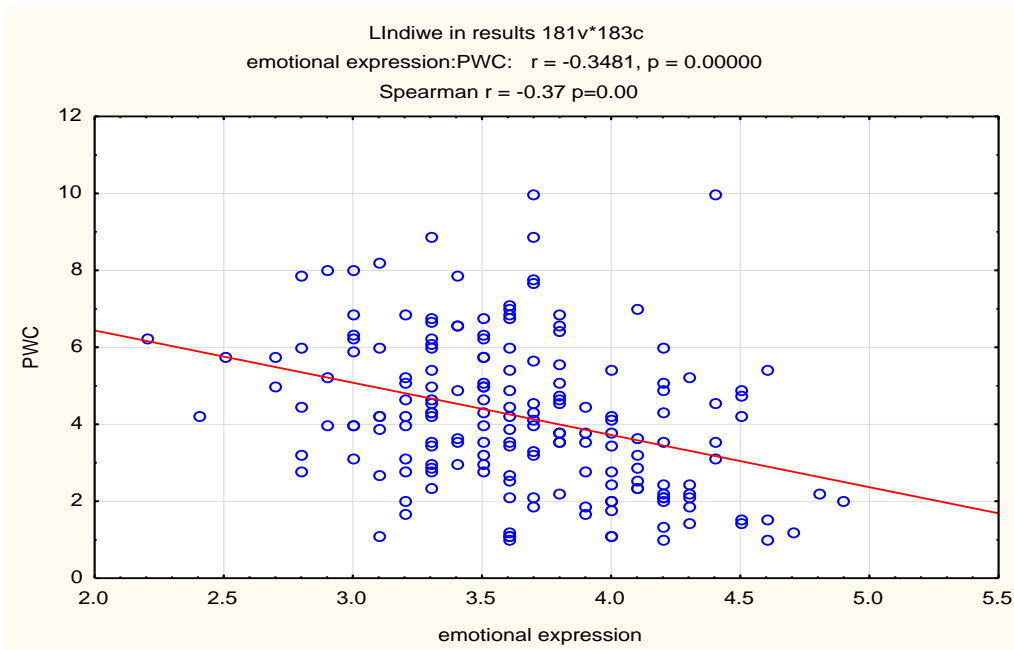


Figure 4.5 Relationship Between EE and PWC

H6: There is a significant positive relationship between EE and OA.

The results of Table 4.2 show a low significant positive correlation between emotional expression and organisational acumen ($r=.37$; $p=.00$) (see Figure 4.6). Based on the results, hypothesis 6 was accepted.



Figure 4.6 Relationship Between EE and OA

H7: There is a significant positive relationship between EE and WC.

The results of Table 4.2 show a low significant positive correlation between emotional expression and work competence ($r=.33$; $p=.00$) (see Figure 4.7). Based on the results, hypothesis 7 was accepted.

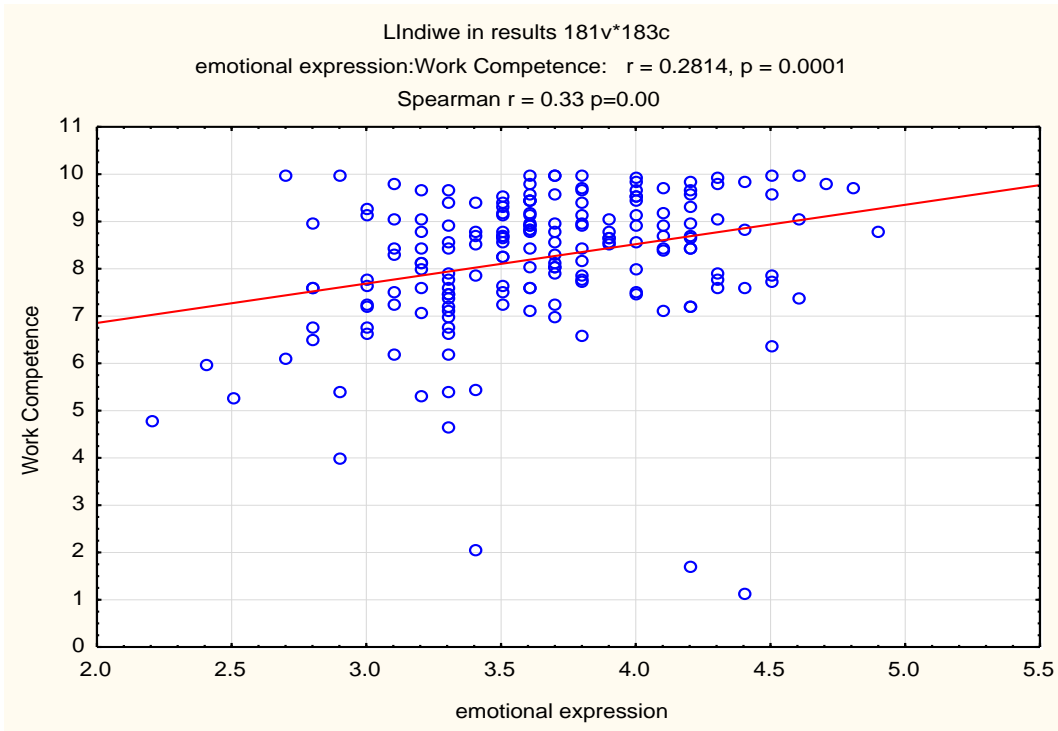


Figure 4.7 Relationship Between EE and WC

H8: There is a significant positive relationship between EE and SI

The results of Table 4.2 show a low significant positive correlation between emotional expression and social intelligence ($r=.25$; $p=.00$) (see Figure 4.8). Based on the results, hypothesis 8 was accepted.

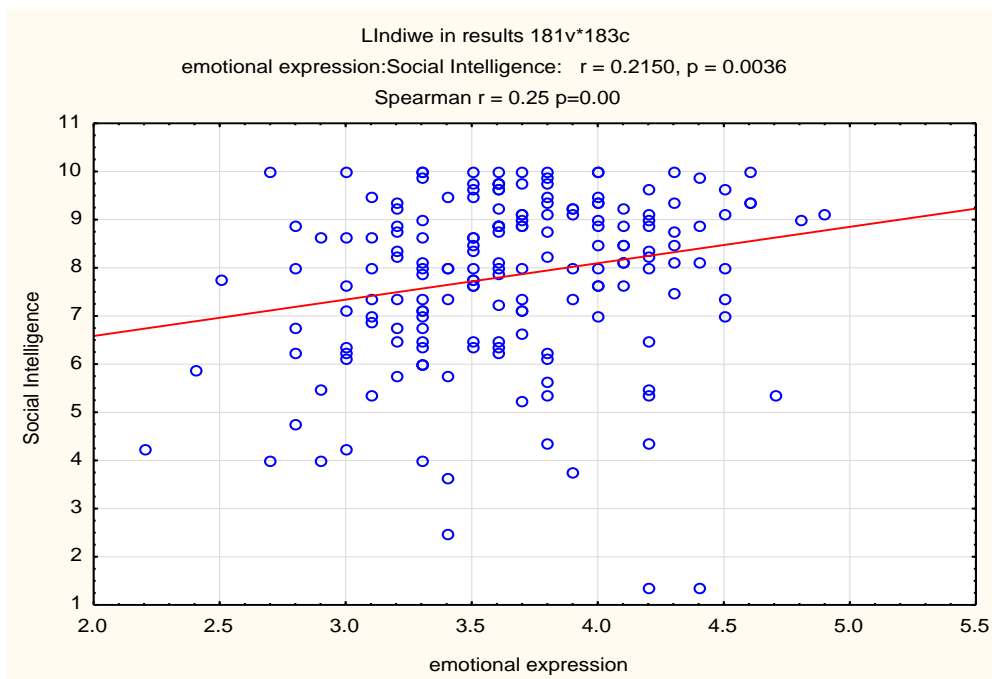


Figure 4.8 Relationship Between EE and SI

H9: There is a positive and significant relationship between EAO and PWC

The results of Table 4.2 show a low significant negative correlation between emotional awareness of others and personal work characteristics ($r=-.35$; $p=.00$) (see Figure 4.9). Based on the results, hypothesis 9 was rejected.

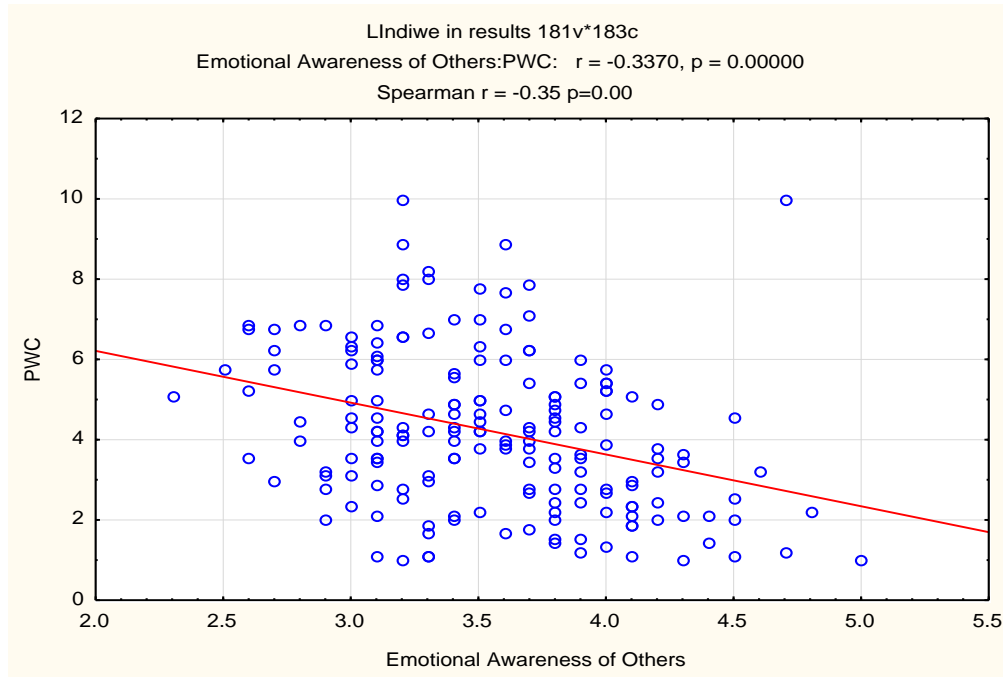


Figure 4.9 Relationship Between EAO and PWC

H10: There is a significant positive relationship between EAO and OA.

The results of Table 4.2 show a low but significant positive correlation between emotional awareness of others and organisational acumen ($r = .33$; $p=.00$) (see Figure 4.10). Based on the results, hypothesis 10 was rejected.

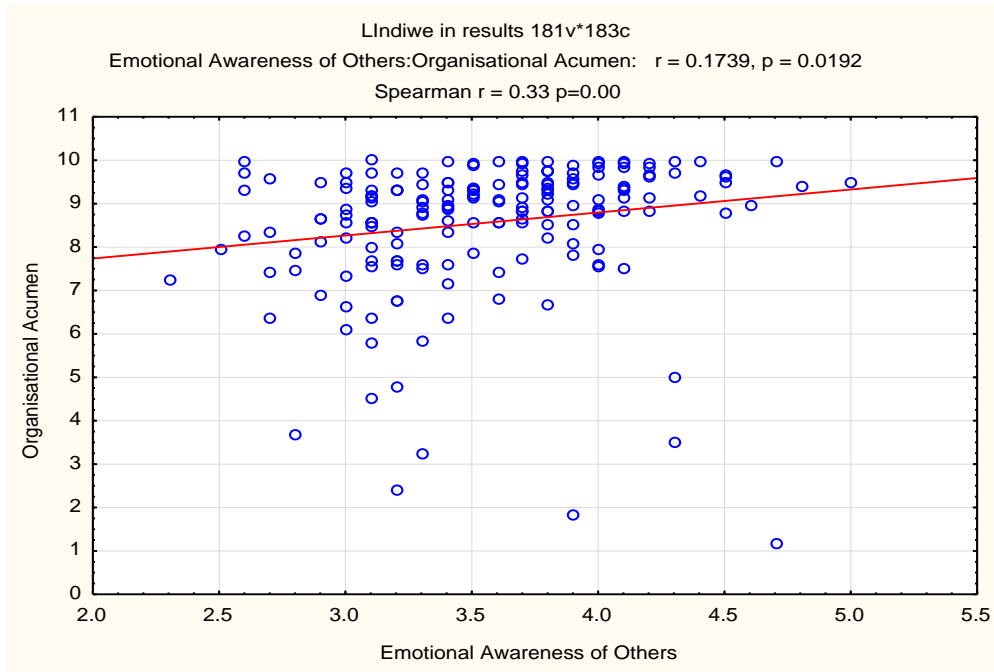


Figure 4.10 Relationship Between EAO and OA

H11: There is a significant positive relationship between EAO and WC.

The results of Table 4.2 show a low but significant positive correlation between emotional awareness of others and work competence ($r=.29; p=.00$) (see Figure 4.11). Based on the results, hypothesis 11 was accepted.

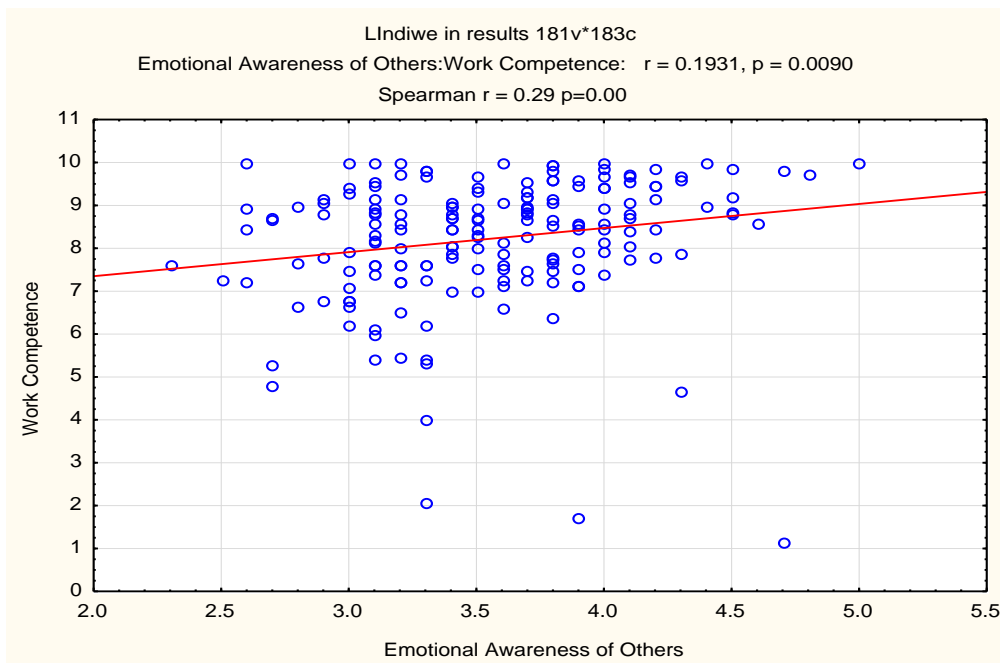


Figure 4.11 Relationship Between EAO and WC

H12: There is a significant positive relationship between EAO and SI.

The results of Table 4.2 show a low negligible but significant correlation between emotional awareness of others and social intelligence ($r=.19$; $p=.01$) (see Figure 4.12). Based on the results, hypothesis 12 was rejected.

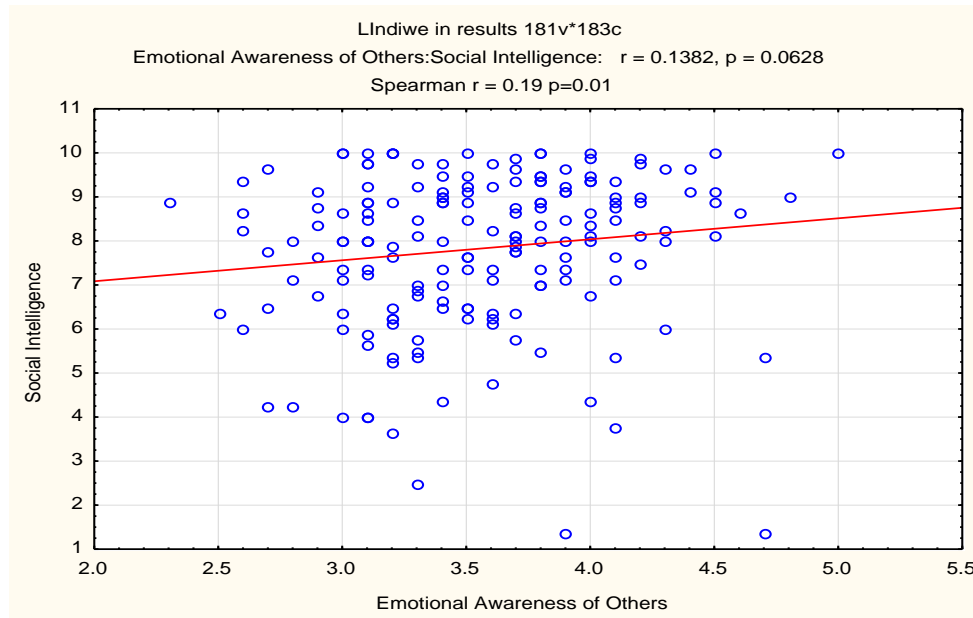


Figure 4.12 Relationship Between EAO and SI

H13: There is a significant positive relationship between ER and PWC.

The results of Table 4.2 show a low significant negative correlation between emotional reasoning and personal work characteristics ($r=-.23$; $p=.00$) (see Figure 4.13). Based on the results, hypothesis 13 was rejected.

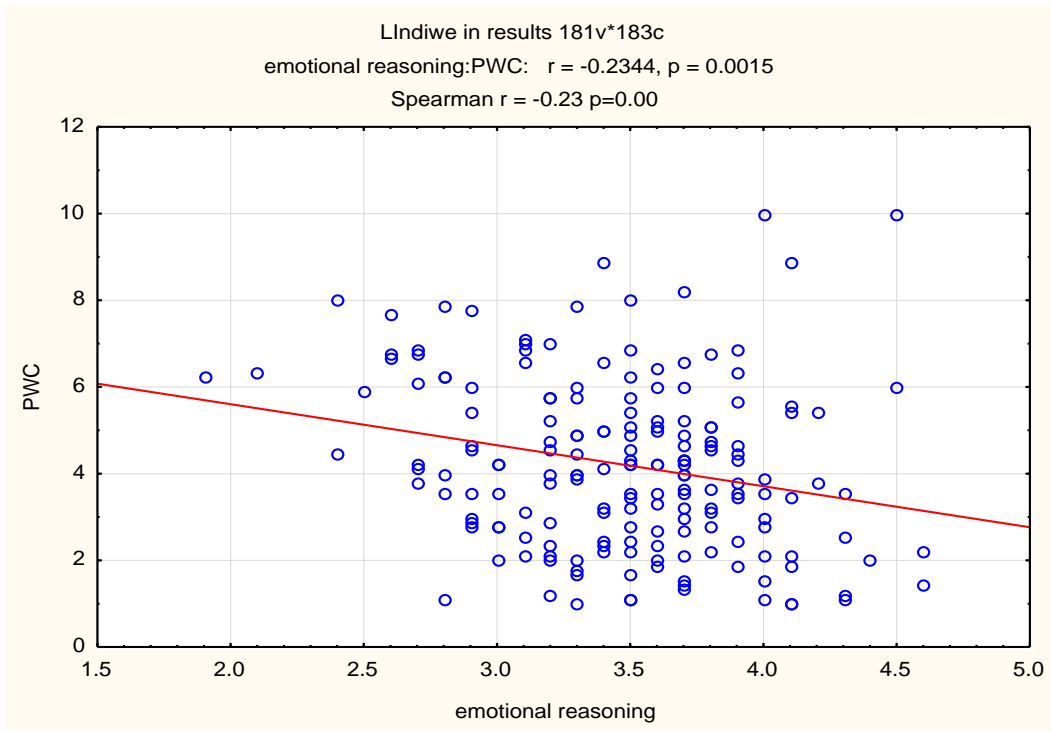


Figure 4.13 Relationship Between ER and PWC

H14: There is a significant positive relationship between ER and OA.

The results of Table 4.2 show a low significant positive correlation between emotional reasoning and organisational acumen ($r=.20$; $p=.01$) (see Figure 4.14). Based on the results, hypothesis 14 was accepted.

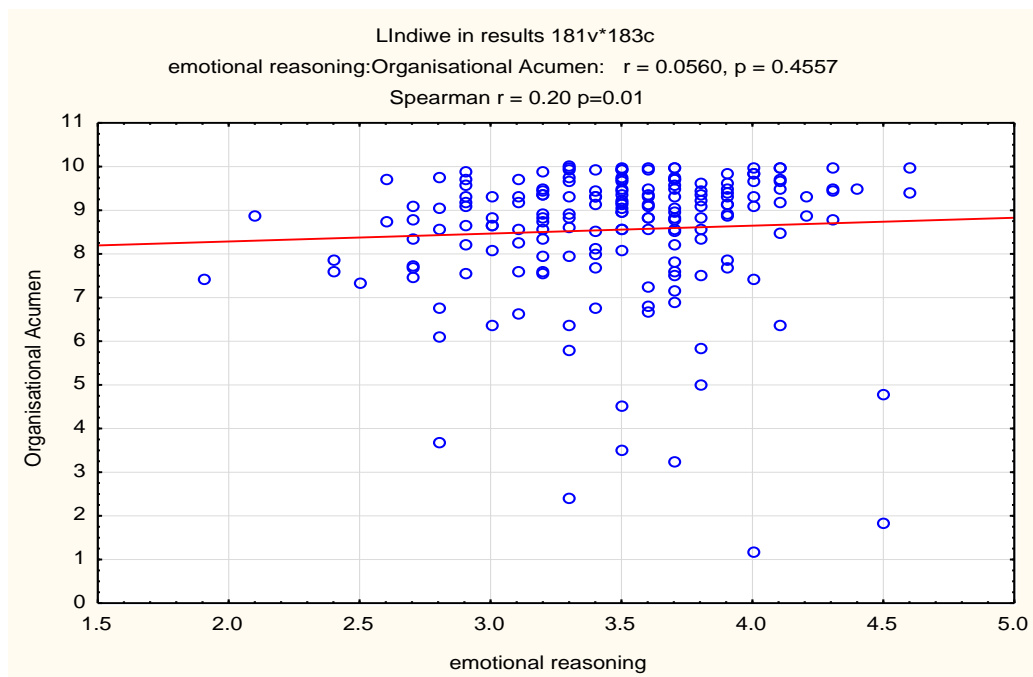


Figure 4.14 Relationship Between ER and OA

H15: There is a significant positive relationship between ER and WC.

The results of Table 4.2 show a low significant positive correlation between emotional reasoning and work competence ($r=.28$; $p=.01$) (see Figure 4.15). Based on the results, hypothesis 15 was accepted.

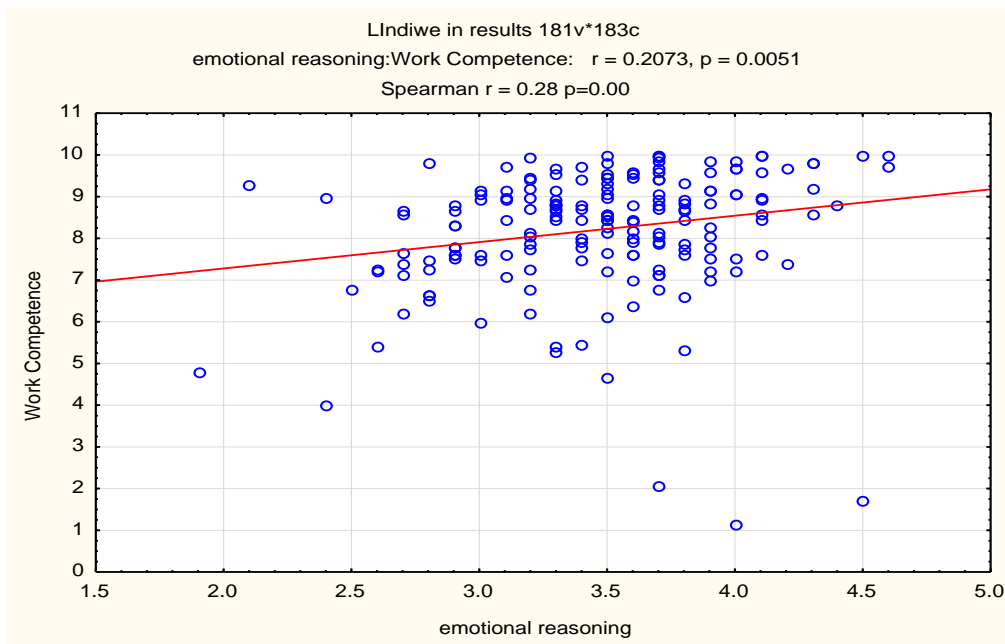


Figure 4.15 Relationship Between ER and WC

H16: There is a significant positive relationship between ER and SI.

The results of Table 4.2 show a low significant positive correlation between emotional reasoning and social intelligence ($r=.23$; $p=.00$) (see Figure 4.16). Based on the results, hypothesis 16 was accepted.

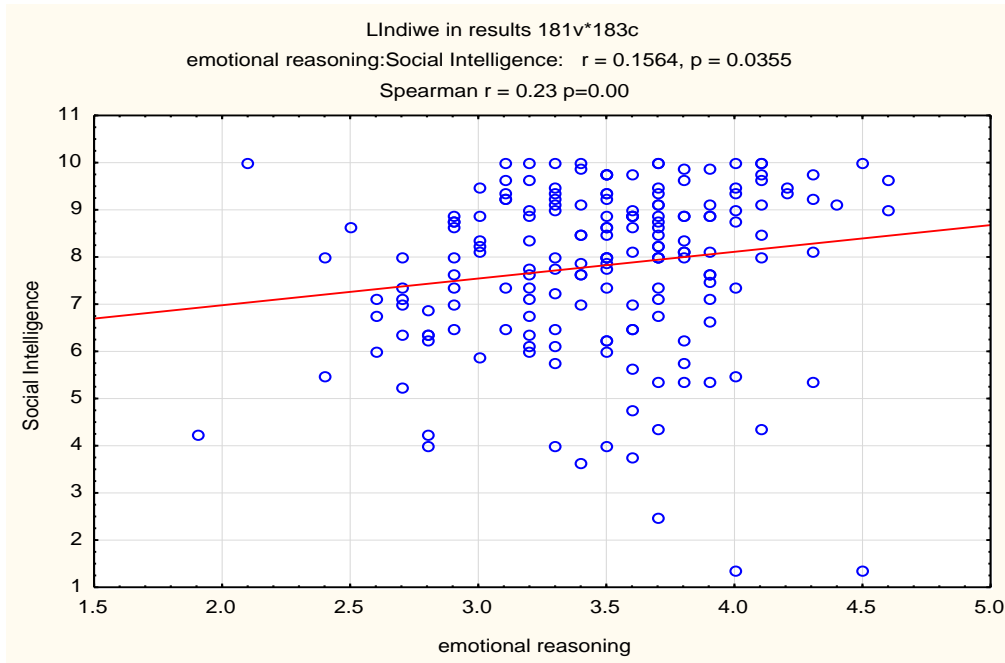


Figure 4.16 Relationship Between ER and SI

H17: There is a positive and significant relationship between ESM and PWC

The results of Table 4.2 show a low but significant positive correlation between emotional self-management and personal work characteristics ($r=-.36$; $p=.00$) (see Figure 4.17). Based on the results, hypothesis 17 was rejected.

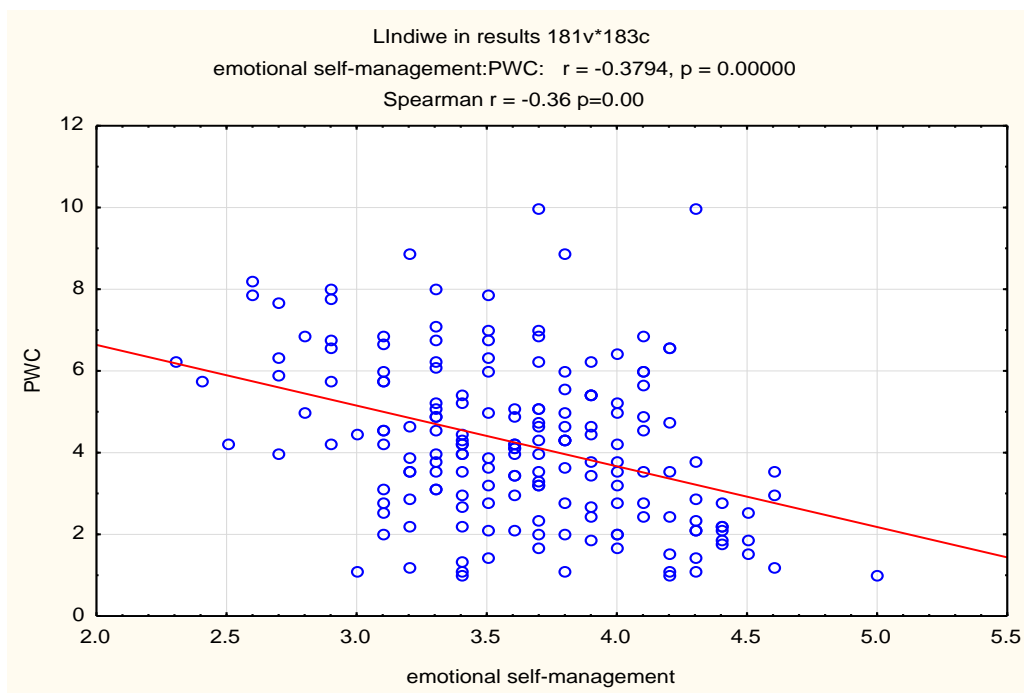


Figure 4.17 Relationship Between ESM and PWC

H18: There is a significant positive relationship between ESM and OA.

The results of Table 4.2 show a moderate significant positive correlation between emotional self-management and organisational acumen ($r=0.42$; $p=0.00$) (see Figure 4.18). Based on the results, hypothesis 18 was accepted.

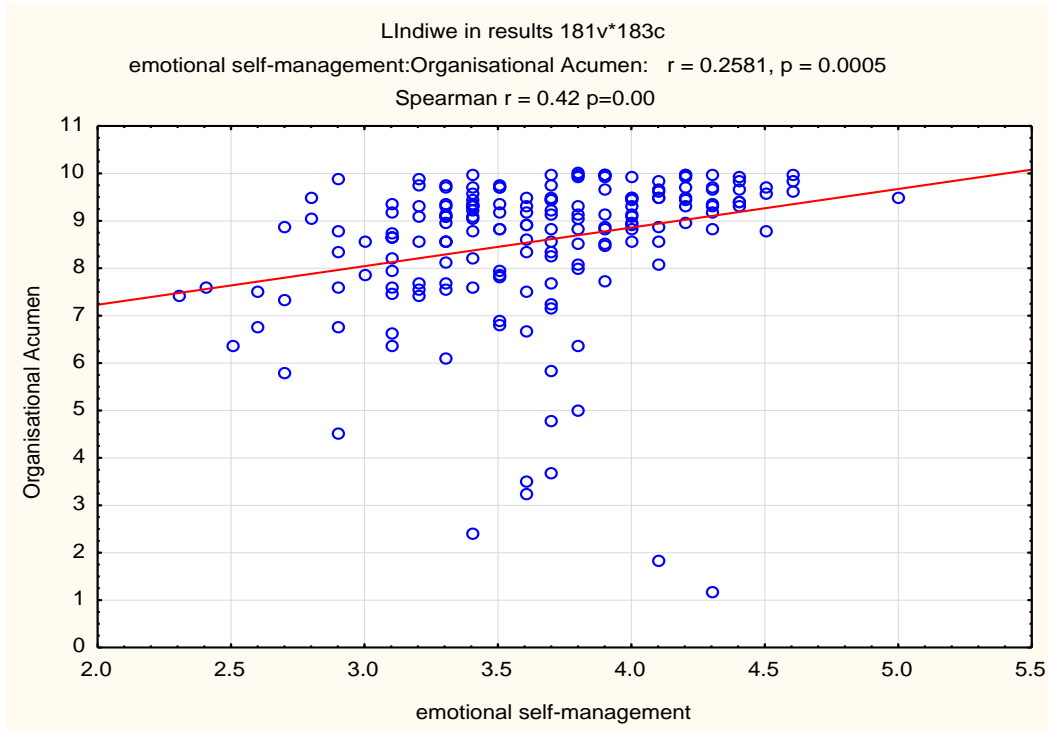


Figure 4.18 Relationship Between ESM and OA

H19: There is a significant positive relationship between ESM and WC.

The results of Table 4.2 show a low significant positive correlation between emotional self-management and work competence ($r=0.37$; $p=0.00$) (see Figure 4.19). Based on the results, hypothesis 19 was accepted.

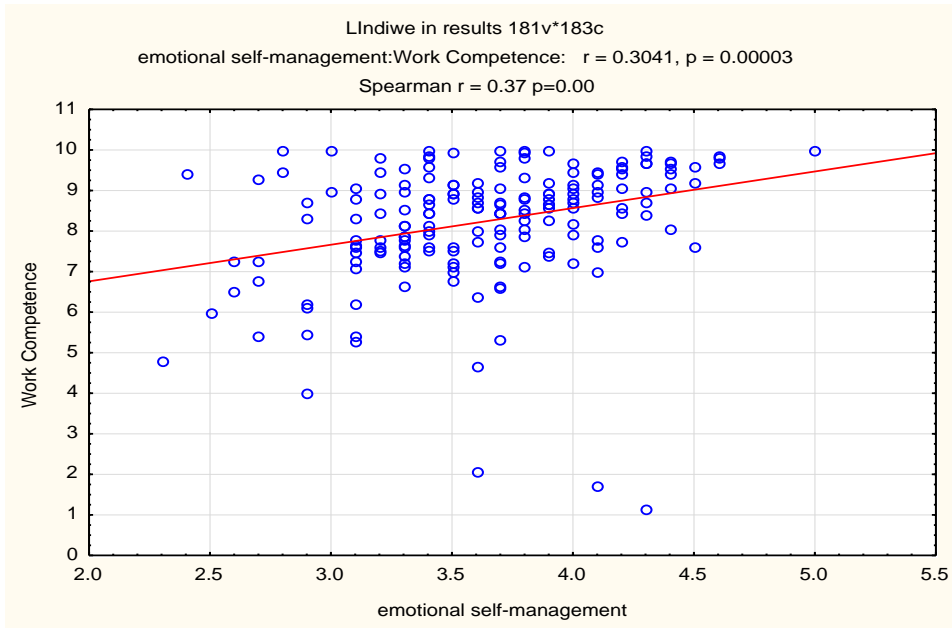


Figure 4.19 Relationship Between ESM and WC

H20: There is a significant positive relationship between ESM and SI.

The results of Table 4.2 show a low but significant positive correlation between emotional self-management and social intelligence ($r=0.29$; $p=0.00$) (see Figure 4.20). Based on the results, hypothesis 20 was accepted.

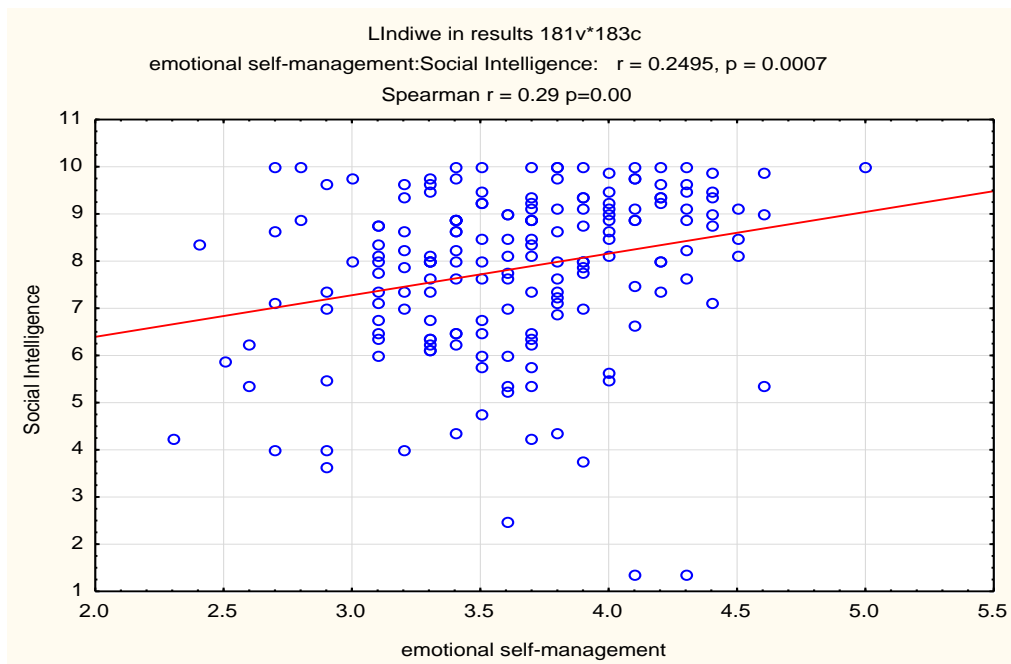


Figure 4.20 Relationship Between ESM and SI

H21: There is a significant positive relationship between EMO and PWC.

The results of Table 4.2 show a low significant negative correlation between emotional management of others and personal work characteristics ($r=-.30$; $p=.00$) (see Figure 4.21). Based on the results, hypothesis 21 was rejected.

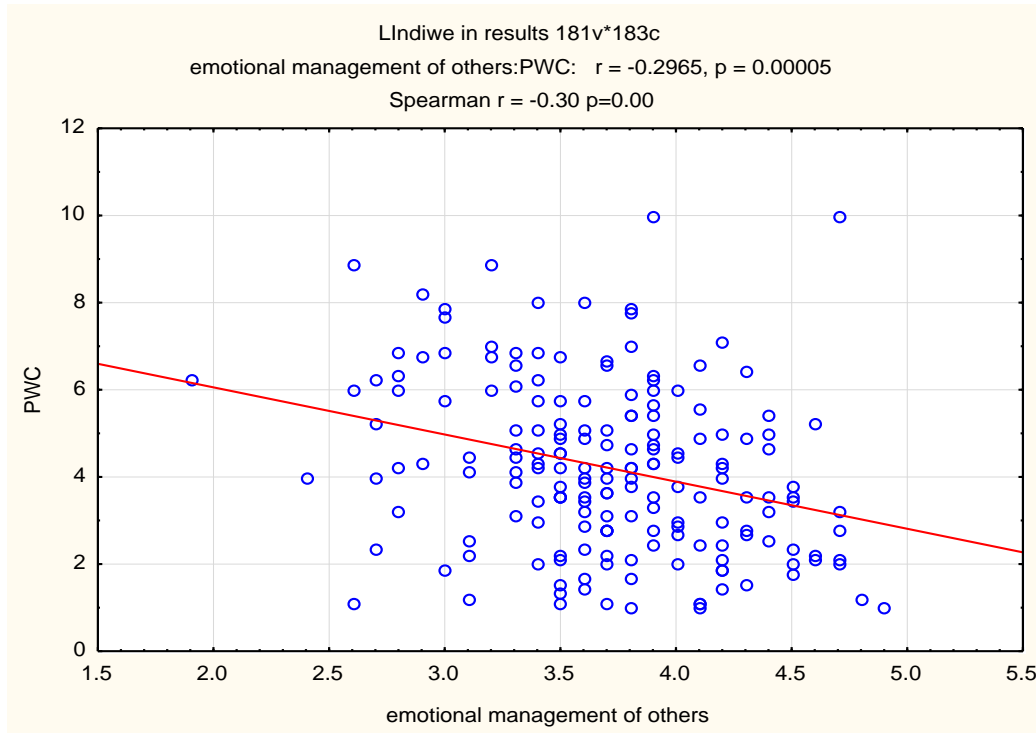


Figure 4.21 Relationship Between EMO and PWC

H22: There is a significant positive relationship between EMO and OA.

The results of Table 4.2 show a low significant positive correlation between emotional management of others and organisational acumen ($r=.23$; $p=.00$) (see Figure 4.22). Based on the results, hypothesis 22 was accepted.

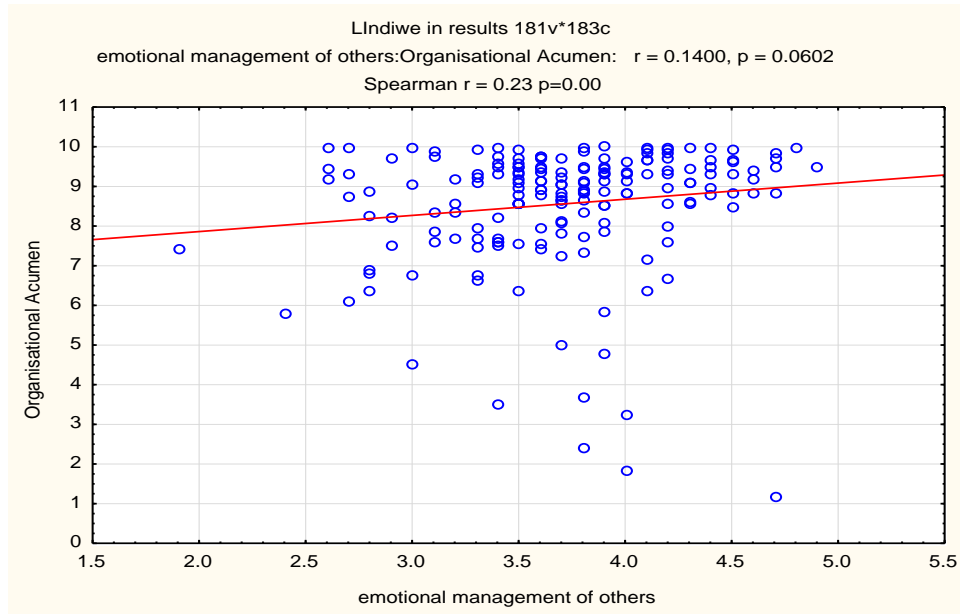


Figure 4.22 Relationship Between EMO and OA

H23: There is a significant positive relationship between EMO and WC.

The results of Table 4.2 show a low significant positive correlation between emotional management of others and work competence ($r=.24$; $p=.00$) (see Figure 4.23). Based on the results, hypothesis 23 was accepted.

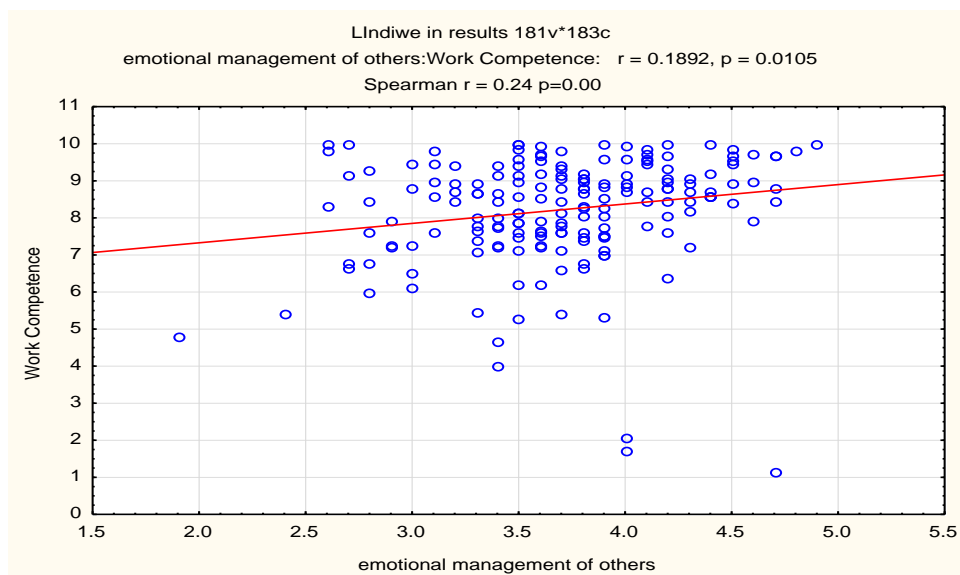


Figure 4.23 Relationship Between EMO and WC

H24: There is a significant positive relationship between EMO and SI.

The results of Table 4.2 show a low significant positive correlation between emotional management of others and social intelligence ($r=.26$; $p=.00$) (see Figure 4.24). Based on the results, hypothesis 24 was accepted.

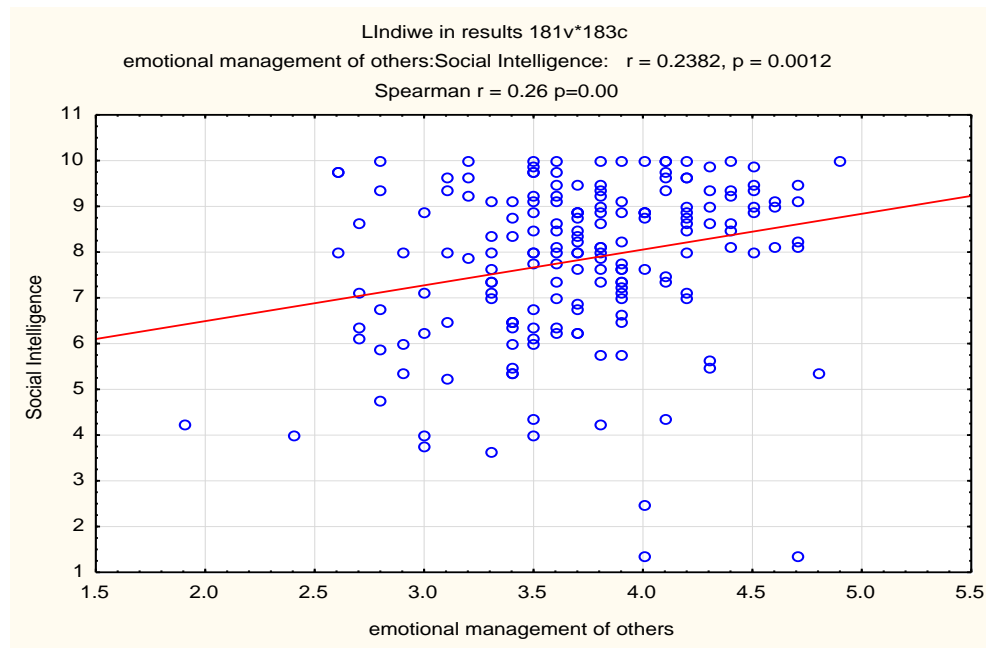


Figure 4.24 Relationship Between EMO and SI

H25: There is a significant positive relationship between ESC and PWC.

The results of Table 4.2 show a low significant negative correlation between emotional self-control and personal work characteristics ($r=-.38$; $p=.00$) (see Figure 4.25). Based on the results, hypothesis 25 was rejected.

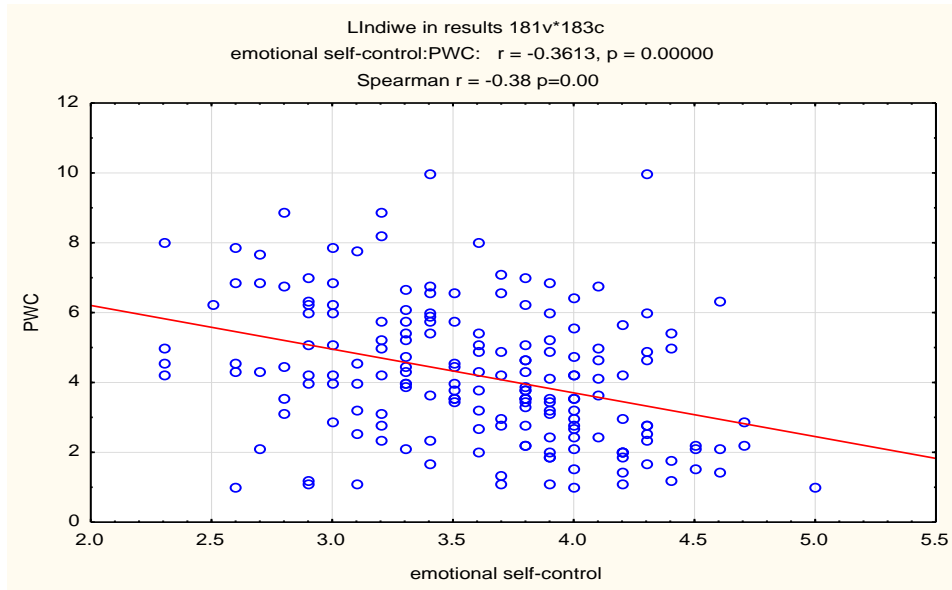


Figure 4.25 Relationship Between ESC and PWC

H26: There is a significant positive relationship between ESC and OA.

The results of Table 4.2 show a low significant positive correlation between emotional self-control and organisational acumen ($r=.29$; $p=.00$) (see Figure 4.26). Based on the results, hypothesis 26 was accepted.

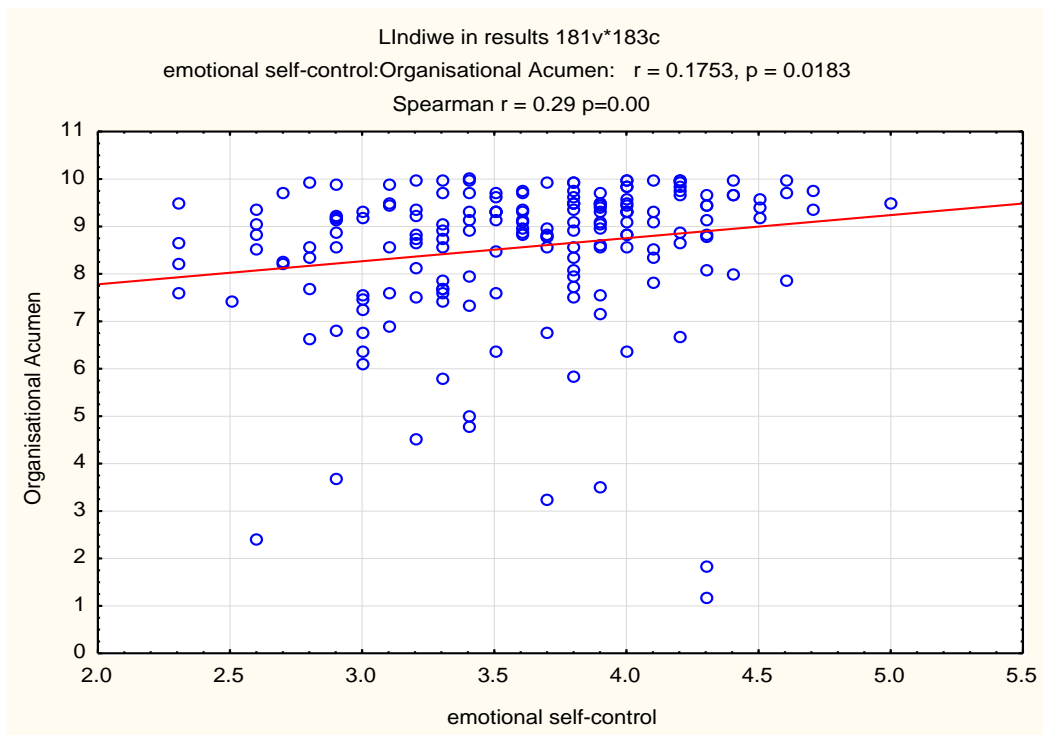


Figure 4.26 Relationship Between ESC and OA

H27: There is a significant positive relationship between ESC and WC.

The results of Table 4.2 show a low significant positive correlation between emotional self-control and work competence ($r=.24$; $p=.00$) (see Figure 4.27). Based on the results, hypothesis 27 was accepted.



Figure 4.27 Relationship Between ESC and WC

H28: There is a significant positive relationship between ESC and SI.

The results of Table 4.2 show a low negligible and insignificant correlation between emotional self-control and social intelligence ($r=.13$; $p=.08$) (see Figure 4.28). Based on the results, hypothesis 28 was rejected.

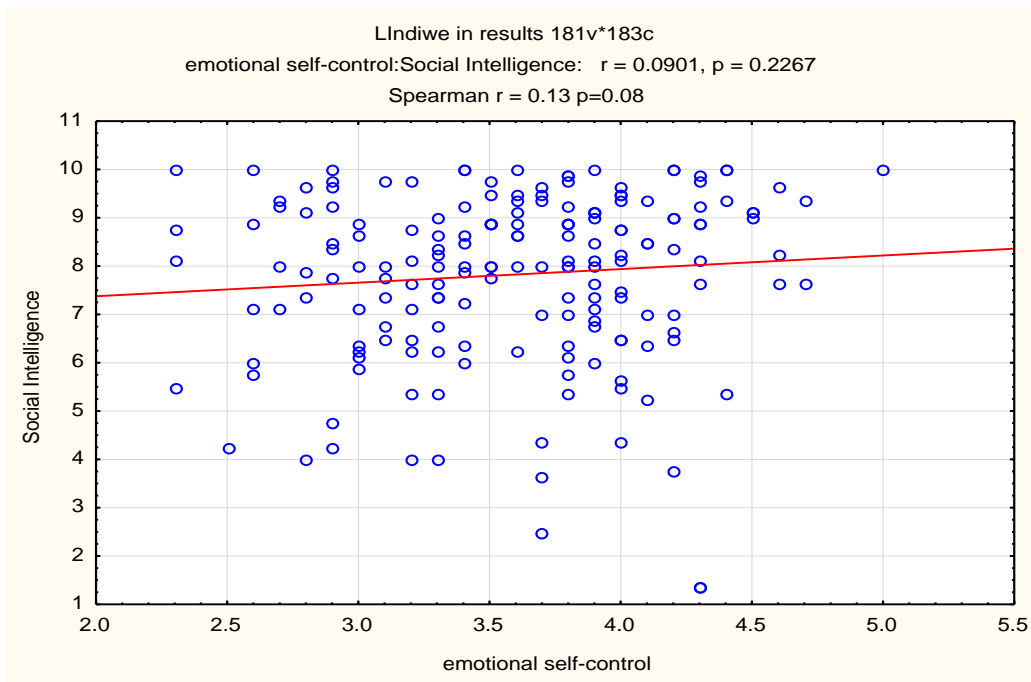


Figure 4.28 Relationship Between ESC and SI

The next section focuses on the results of the correlation between the subscales of the PsyCap PCQ 24 (efficacy, hope, resilience and optimism) and WRS (personal work characteristics; organisational acumen; work competence and social intelligence) (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3
Correlations Between Subscales of PsyCap and Subscales of WR

| Independent variables | Dependent variable | Spearman r | p |
|-----------------------|--------------------|------------|-----|
| PsyCap Efficacy | PWC | -.28 | .00 |
| PsyCap Efficacy | OA | .37 | .00 |
| PsyCap Efficacy | WC | .48 | .00 |
| PsyCap Efficacy | SI | .39 | .00 |
| PsyCap Hope | PWC | -.31 | .00 |
| PsyCap Hope | OA | .43 | .00 |
| PsyCap Hope | WC | .45 | .00 |
| PsyCap Hope | SI | .31 | .00 |
| PsyCap Resilience | PWC | -.38 | .00 |
| PsyCap Resilience | OA | .27 | .00 |
| PsyCap Resilience | WC | .26 | .00 |
| PsyCap Resilience | SI | .17 | .02 |
| PsyCap Optimism | PWC | -.41 | .00 |
| PsyCap Optimism | OA | .52 | .00 |
| PsyCap Optimism | WC | .40 | .00 |
| PsyCap Optimism | SI | .25 | .00 |

Notes: PWC = personal work characteristics; OA = organisational acumen; WC = work competencies; SI = social intelligence

H29: There is a positive significant relationship between efficacy and PWC

The results in Table 4.3 show a low significant negative correlation between efficacy and personal work characteristics ($r=-.28$; $p=.00$) (see Figure 4.29). Based on the results, hypothesis 29 was rejected.

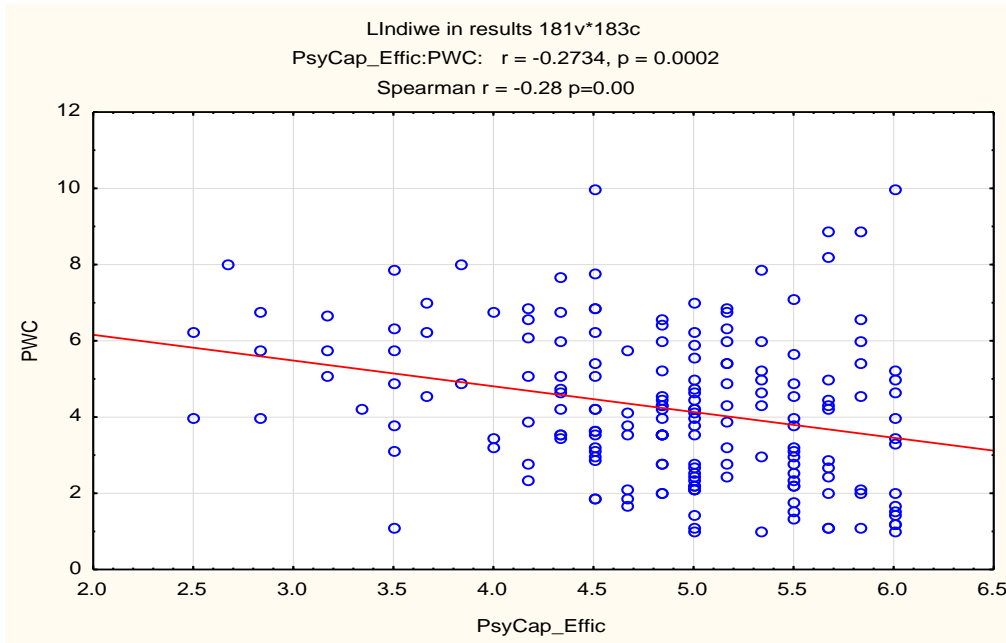


Figure 4.29 Relationship Between Efficacy and PWC

H30: There is a positive significant relationship between efficacy and OA

The results in Table 4.3 show a low significant positive correlation between efficacy and organisational acumen ($r=.37; p=.00$) (see Figure 4.30). Based on the results, hypothesis 30 was accepted.

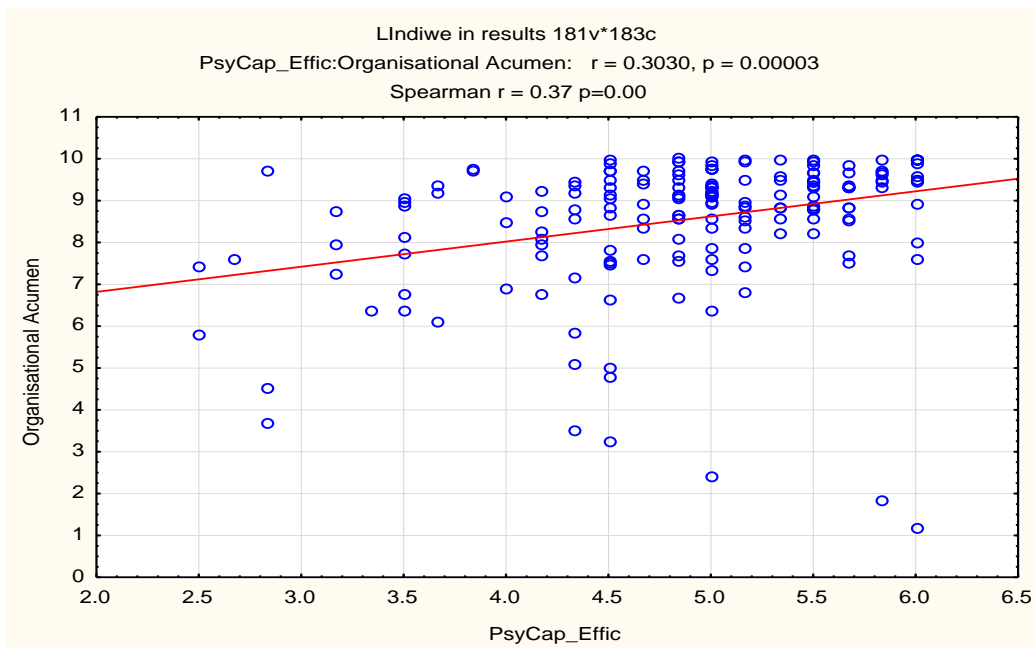


Figure 4.30 Relationship Between Efficacy and OA

H31: There is a positive significant relationship between efficacy and WC

The results in Table 4.3 show a moderate significant positive correlation between efficacy and work competence ($r=0.48$; $p=0.00$) (see Figure 4.31). Based on the results, hypothesis 31 was accepted.

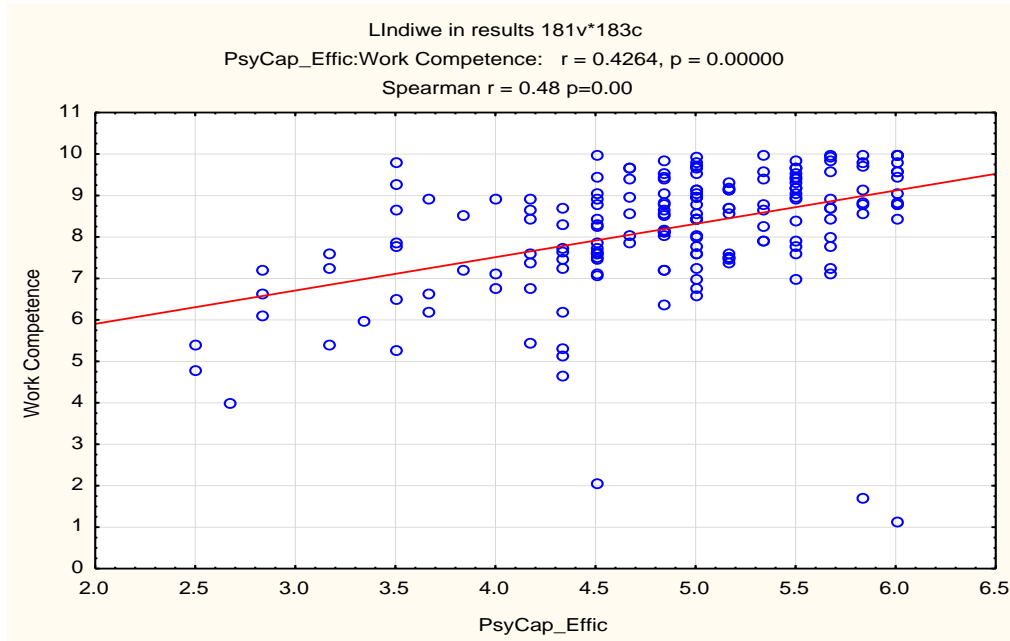


Figure 4.31 Relationship Between Efficacy and WC

H32: There is a positive significant relationship between efficacy and SI

The results in Table 4.3 show a low significant positive correlation between efficacy and social intelligence ($r=0.39$; $p=0.001$) (see Figure 4.32). Based on the results, hypothesis 32 was accepted.

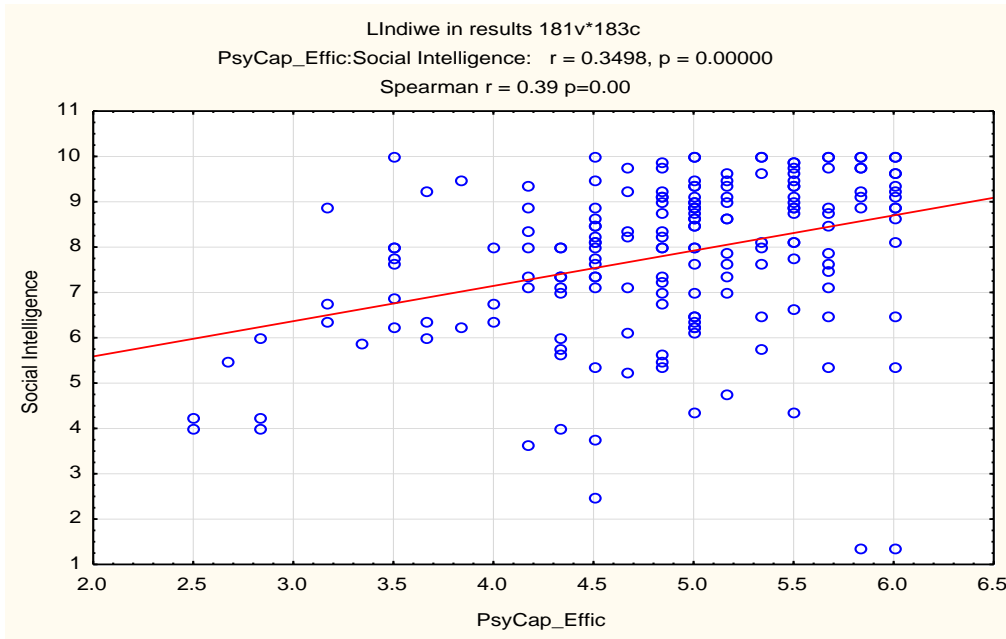


Figure 4.32 Relationship Between Efficacy and SI

H33: There is a significant and positive relationship between hope and PWC

The results of Table 4.3 show a low significant negative correlation between hope and personal work characteristics ($r=-.31$; $p=.00$) (see Figure 4.33). Based on the results, hypothesis 33 was rejected.

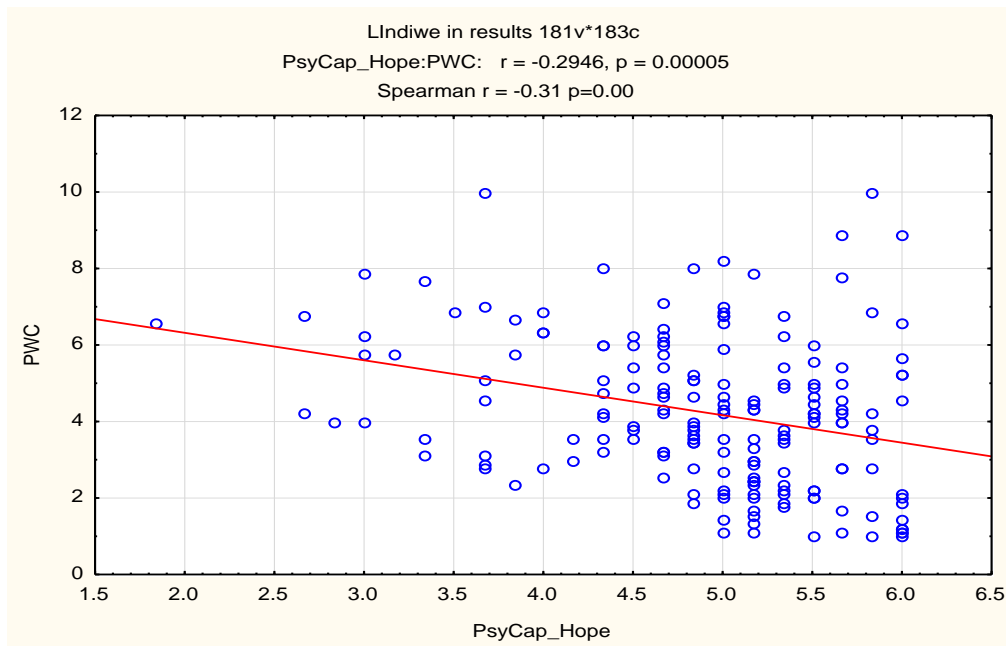


Figure 4.33 Relationship Between Hope and PWC

H34: There is a positive significant relationship between hope and OA

The results of Table 4.3 show a moderate significant positive correlation between hope and organisational acumen ($r=.43$; $p=.00$) (see Figure 4.34). Based on the results, hypothesis 34 was accepted.

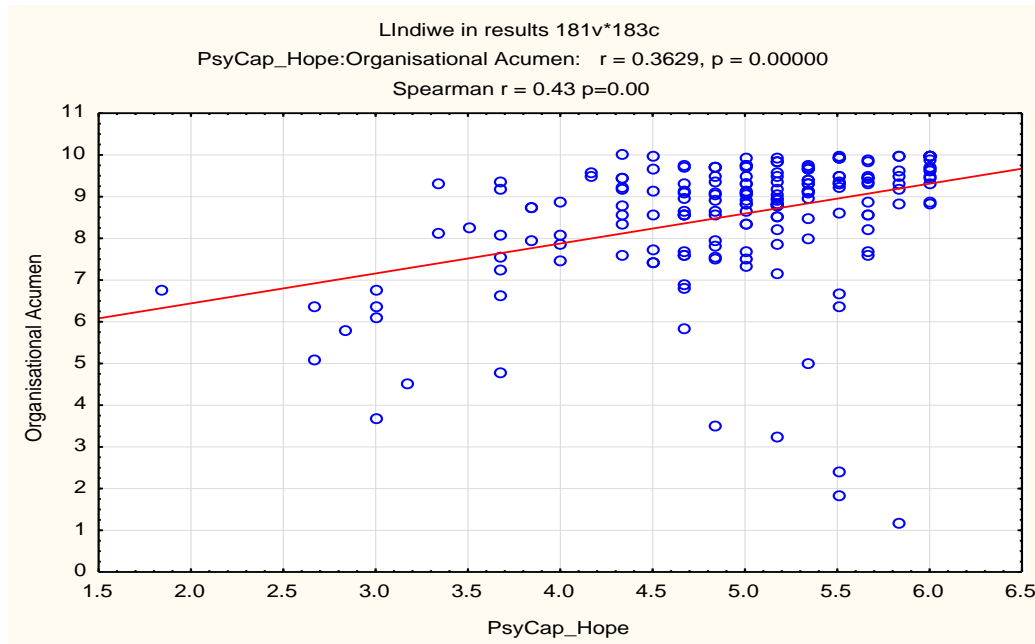


Figure 4.34 Relationship Between Hope and OA

H35: There is a positive significant relationship between hope and WC

The results of Table 4.3 show a moderate significant positive correlation between hope and work competence ($r=.45$; $p=.00$) (see Figure 4.35). Based on the results, hypothesis 35 was accepted.

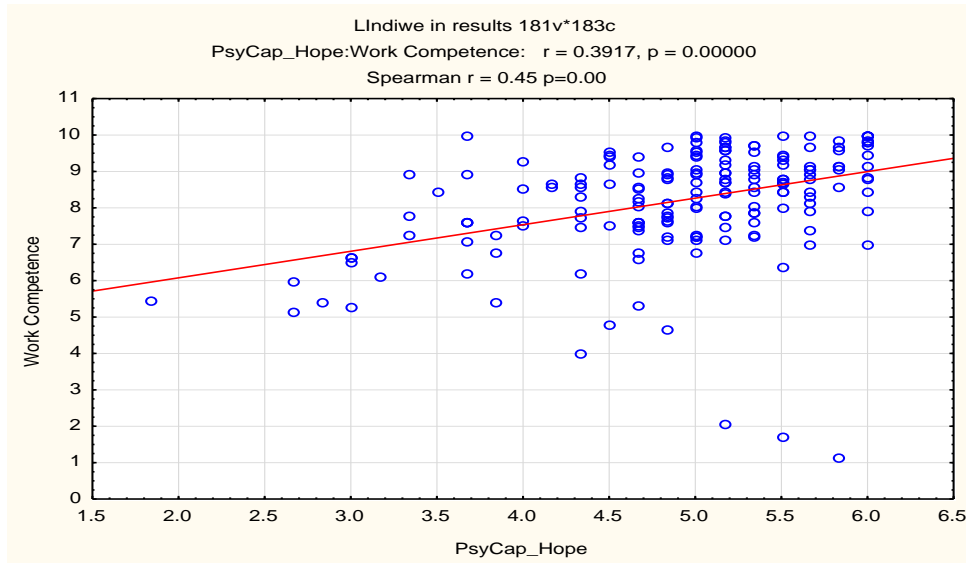


Figure 4.35 Relationship Between Hope and WC

H36: There is a positive significant relationship between hope and SI.

The results of Table 4.3 show a low significant positive correlation between hope and social intelligence ($r=.31$; $p=.00$) (see Figure 4.36). Based on the results, hypothesis 36 was accepted.

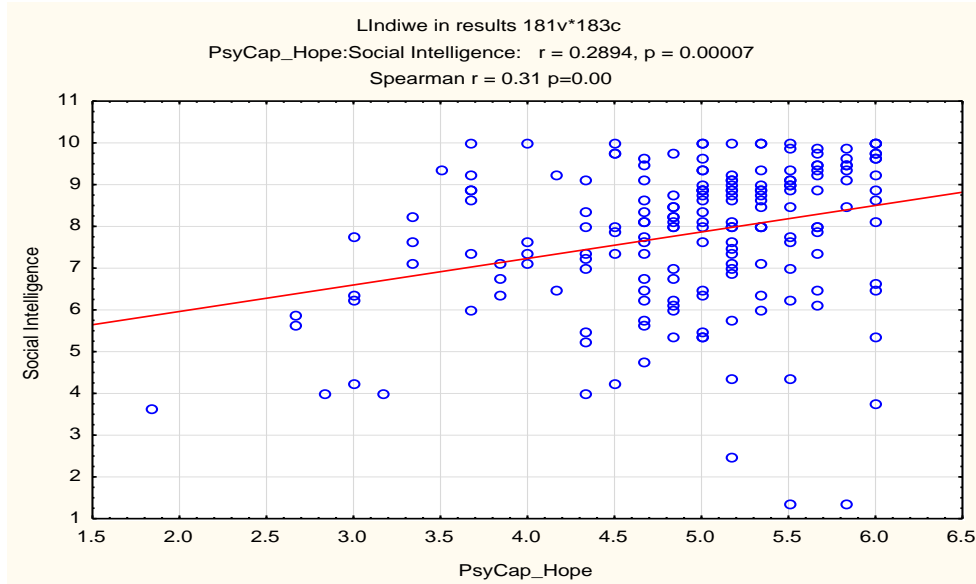


Figure 4.36 Relationship Between Hope and SI

H37: There is a positive significant relationship between resilience and PWC.

The results of Table 4.3 show a low significant negative correlation between resilience and personal work characteristics ($r=-.38$; $p=.00$) (see Figure 4.37). Based on the results, hypothesis 37 was rejected.

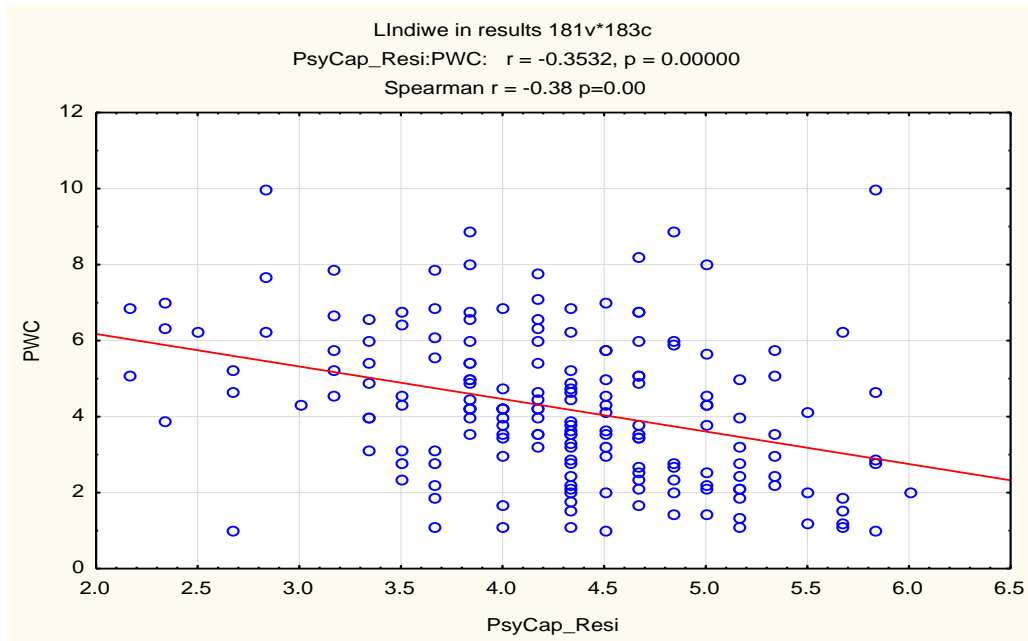


Figure 4.37 Relationship Between Resilience and PWC

H38: There is a positive significant relationship between resilience and OA.

The results of Table 4.3 show a low significant positive correlation between resilience and organisational acumen ($r=.27$; $p=.00$) (see Figure 4.38). Based on the results, hypothesis 38 was accepted.

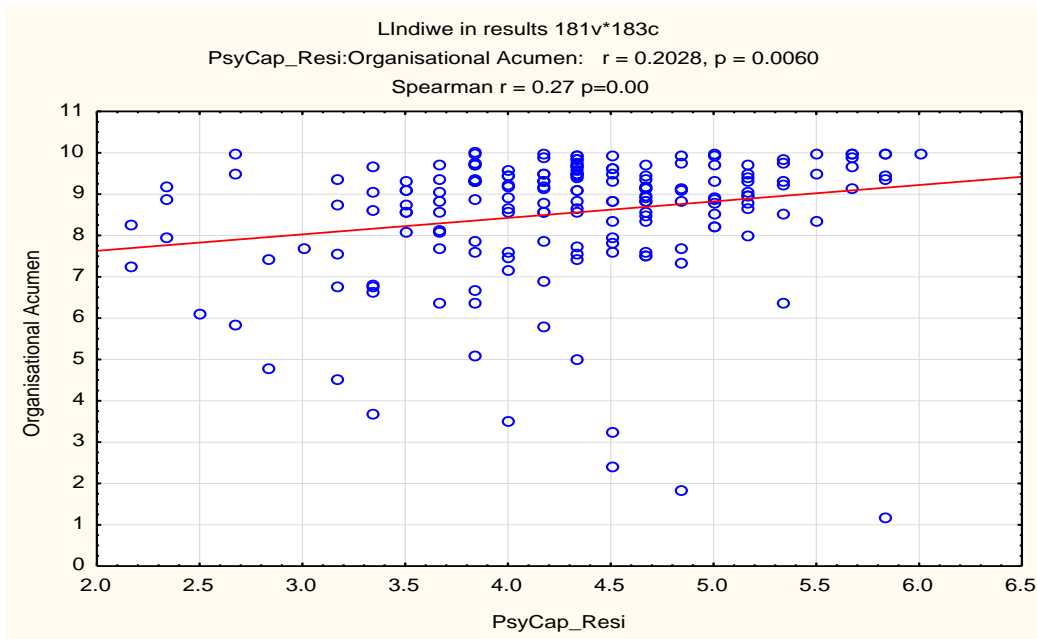


Figure 4.38 Relationship Between Resilience and OA

H39: There is a positive significant relationship between resilience and WC.

The results of Table 4.3 show a low significant positive correlation between resilience and work competence ($r=.26$; $p=.00$) (see Figure 4.39). Based on the results, hypothesis 39 was accepted.

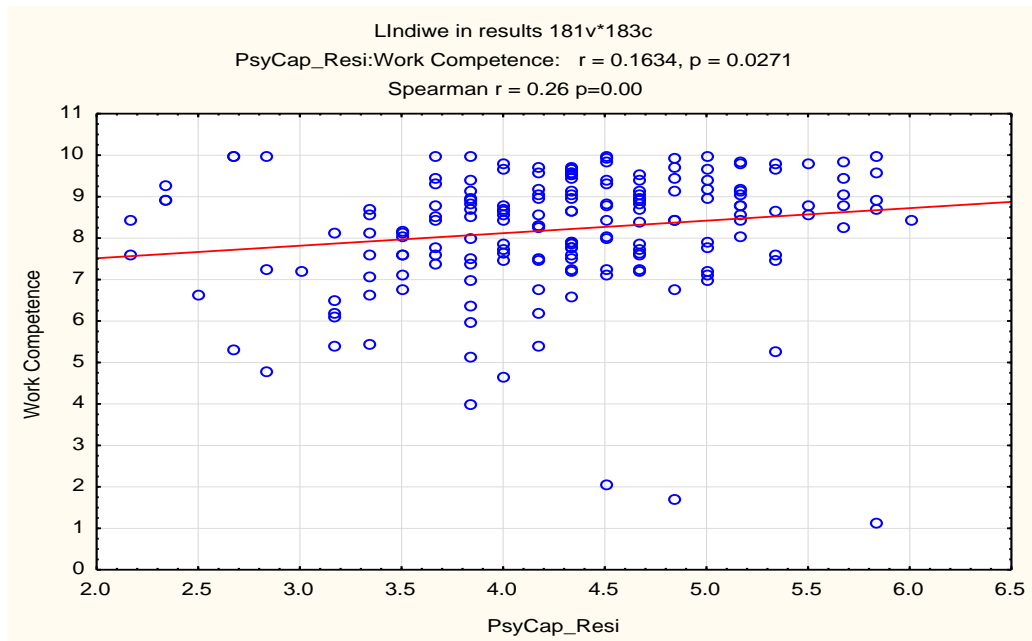


Figure 4.39 Relationship Between Resilience and WC

H40: There is a positive significant relationship between resilience and SI.

The results of Table 4.3 show a negligible significant positive correlation between resilience and social intelligence ($r=.17$; $p=.02$) (see Figure 4.40). Based on the results, hypothesis 40 was rejected.

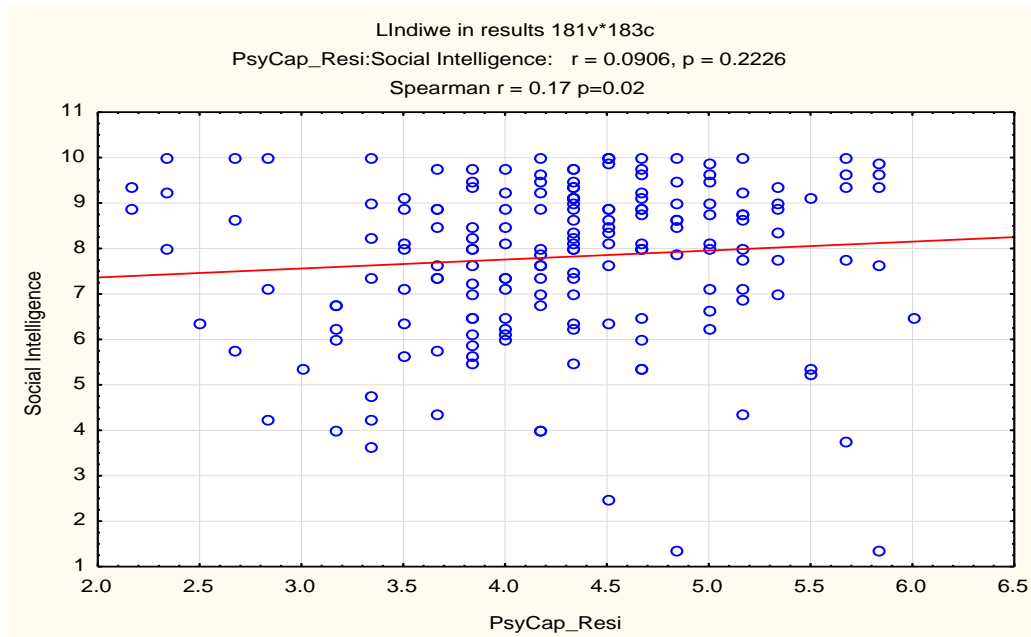


Figure 4.40 Relationship Between Resilience and SI

H41: There is a positive significant relationship between optimism and PWC.

The results of Table 4.3 show a moderate significant negative correlation between optimism and personal work characteristics ($r=-.41$; $p=.00$) (see Figure 4.41). Based on the results, hypothesis 41 was rejected

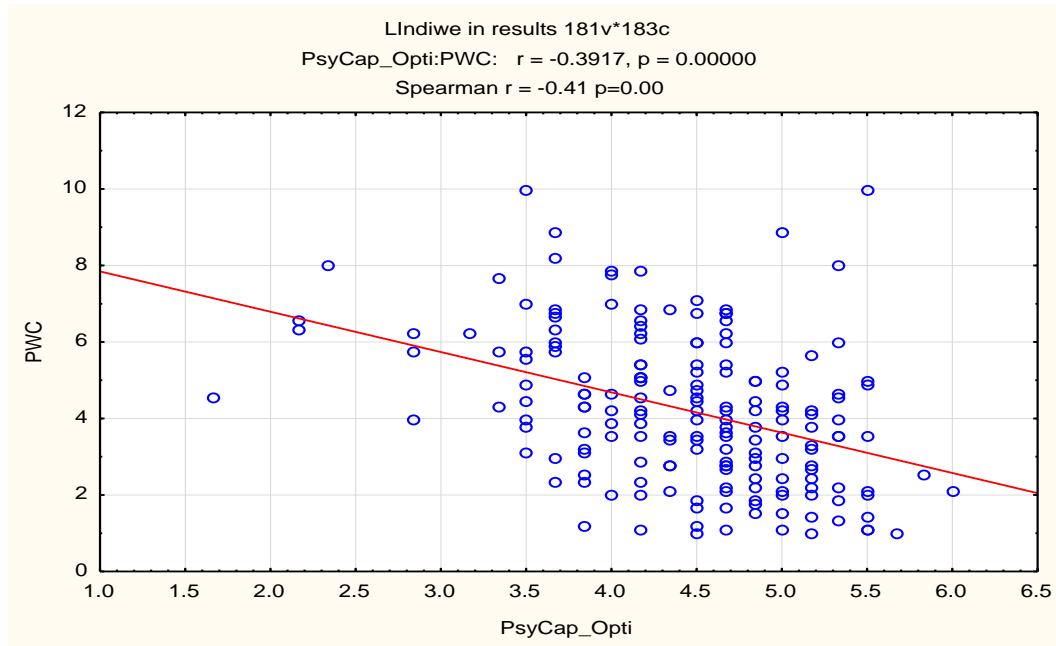


Figure 4.41 Relationship Between Optimism and PWC

H42: There is a positive significant relationship between optimism and OA

The results of Table 4.3 show a moderate significant positive correlation between optimism and organisational acumen ($r=.52$; $p=.00$) (see Figure 4.42). Based on the results, hypothesis 42 was accepted.

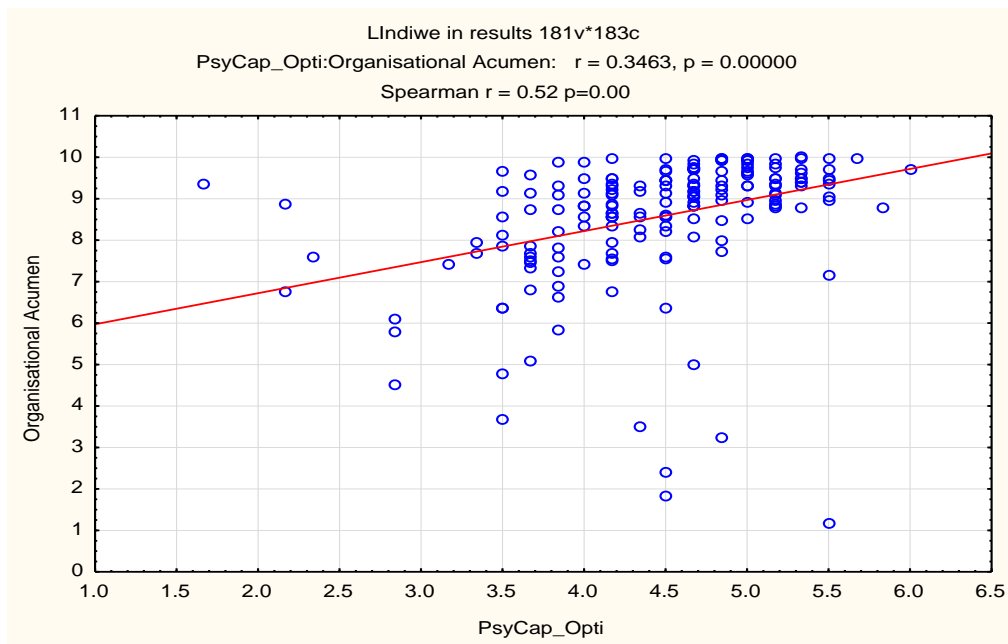


Figure 4.42 Relationship Between Optimism and OA

H43: There is a positive significant relationship between optimism and WC.

The results of Table 4.3 show a moderate significant positive correlation between optimism and work competence ($r=.40$; $p=.00$) (see Figure 4.43). Based on the results, hypothesis 43 was accepted.

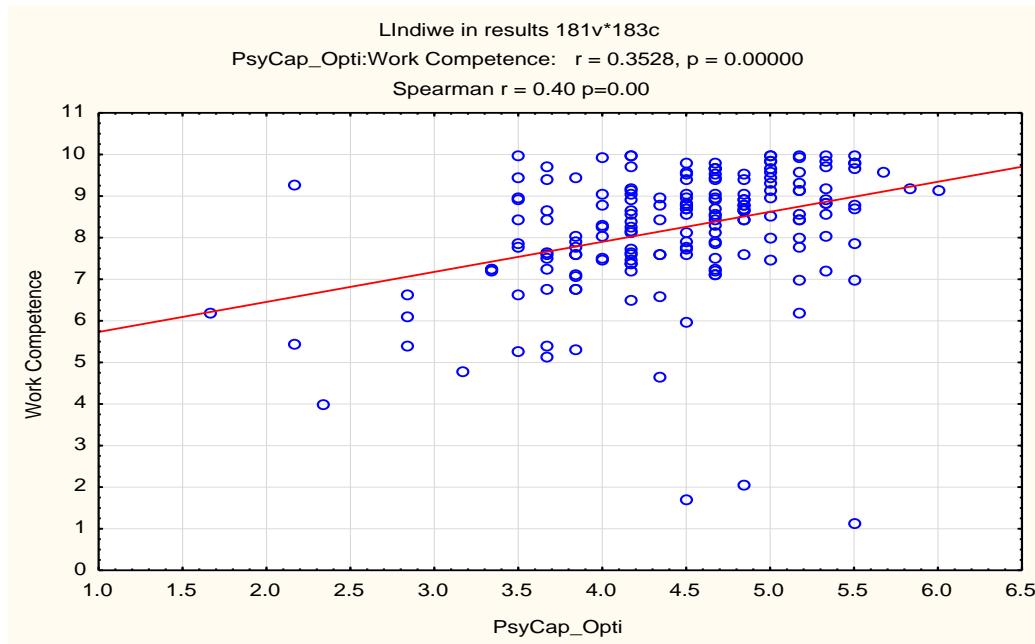


Figure 4.43 Relationship Between Optimism and WC

H44: There is a positive significant relationship between optimism and SI

The results of Table 4.3 show a low significant positive correlation between optimism and social intelligence ($r=.25$; $p=.00$) (see Figure 4.44). Based on the results, hypothesis 44 was accepted.

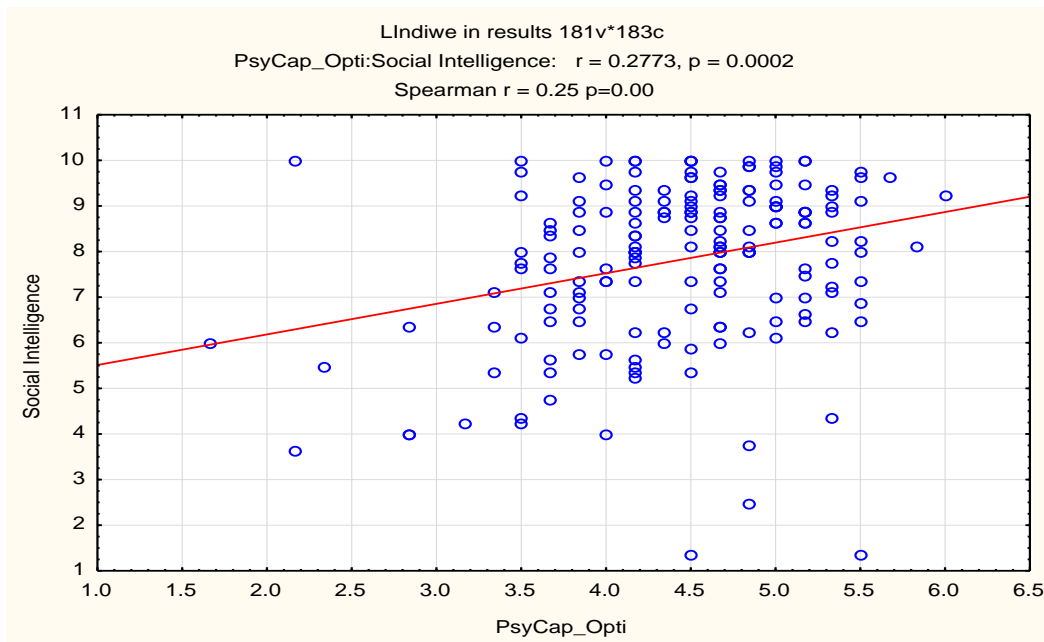


Figure 4.44 Relationship Between Optimism and SI

The next section focuses on the results of the correlation between the subscales of the SOC OLQ (meaning, comprehensibility and manageability) and the subscales of the WR scale (personal work characteristics, organisational acumen, work competence and social intelligence) (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4
Correlations Between Subscales of SOC and Subscales of WR

| Independent variables | Dependent variable | Spearman r | p |
|-----------------------|--------------------|------------|-----|
| Meaning | PWC | -.42 | .00 |
| Meaning | OA | .37 | .00 |
| Meaning | WC | .29 | .00 |
| Meaning | SI | .28 | .00 |
| Comprehensibility | PWC | -.42 | .00 |
| Comprehensibility | OA | .11 | .15 |
| Comprehensibility | WC | .23 | .00 |
| Comprehensibility | SI | .13 | .07 |
| Manageability | PWC | -.40 | .00 |
| Manageability | OA | .19 | .01 |
| Manageability | WC | .19 | .01 |
| Manageability | SI | .13 | .08 |

Notes: PWC= personal work characteristics; OA= organisational acumen; WC = work competencies; SI = social intelligence

H45: There is a positive significant relationship between meaning and PWC.

The results of Table 4.4 show a moderate significant negative correlation between meaning and personal work characteristics ($r = -0.42$; $p = .00$) (see Figure 4.45). Based on the results, hypothesis 45 was rejected.

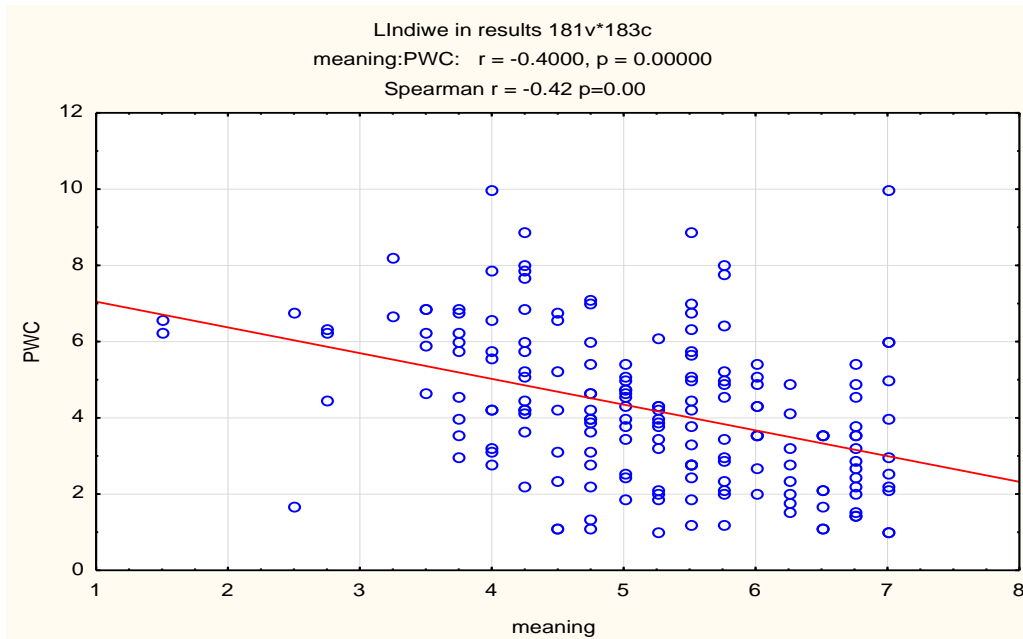


Figure 4.45 Relationship Between Meaning and PWC

H46: There is a positive significant relationship between meaning and OA.

The results of Table 4.4 show a low significant positive correlation between meaning and organisational acumen ($r=.37$; $p=.00$) (see Figure 4.46). Based on the results, hypothesis 46 was accepted.

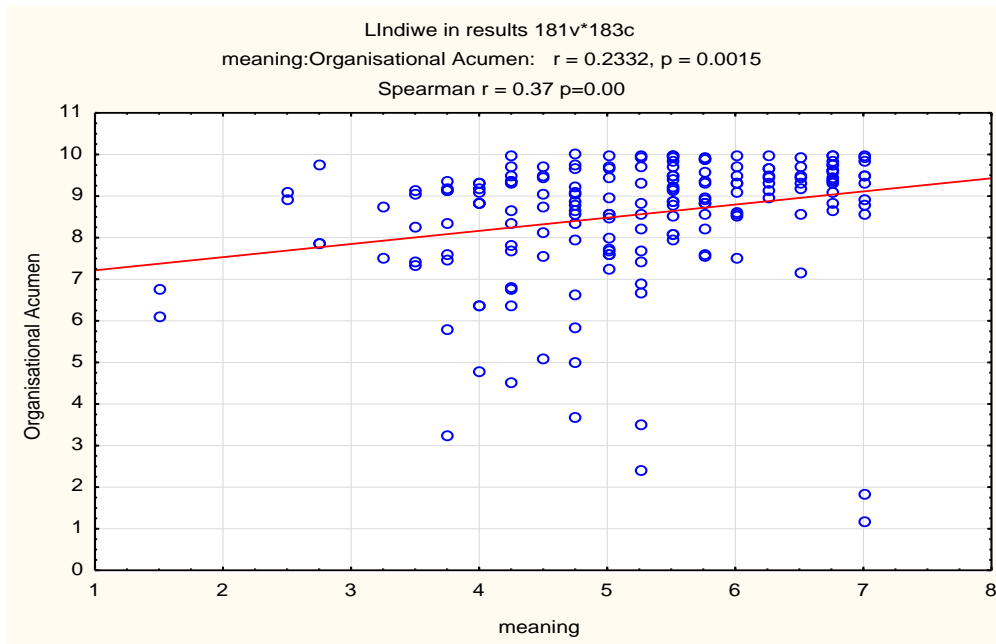


Figure 4.46 Relationship Between Meaning and OA

H47: There is a positive significant relationship between meaning and WC.

The results of Table 4.4 show a low significant positive correlation between meaning and work competence ($r=.29$; $p=.00$) (see Figure 4.47). Based on the results, hypothesis 47 was accepted.

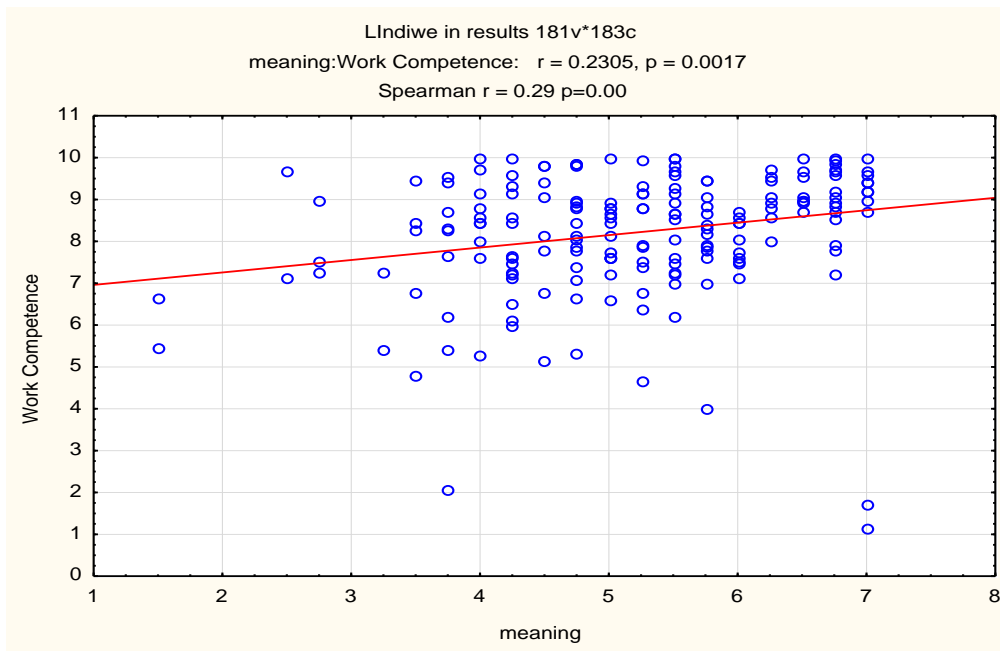


Figure 4.47 Relationship Between Meaning and WC

H48: There is a positive significant relationship between meaning and SI.

The results of Table 4.4 show a low significant positive correlation between meaning and social intelligence ($r=.28$; $p=.00$) (see Figure 4.48). Based on the results, hypothesis 48 was accepted.

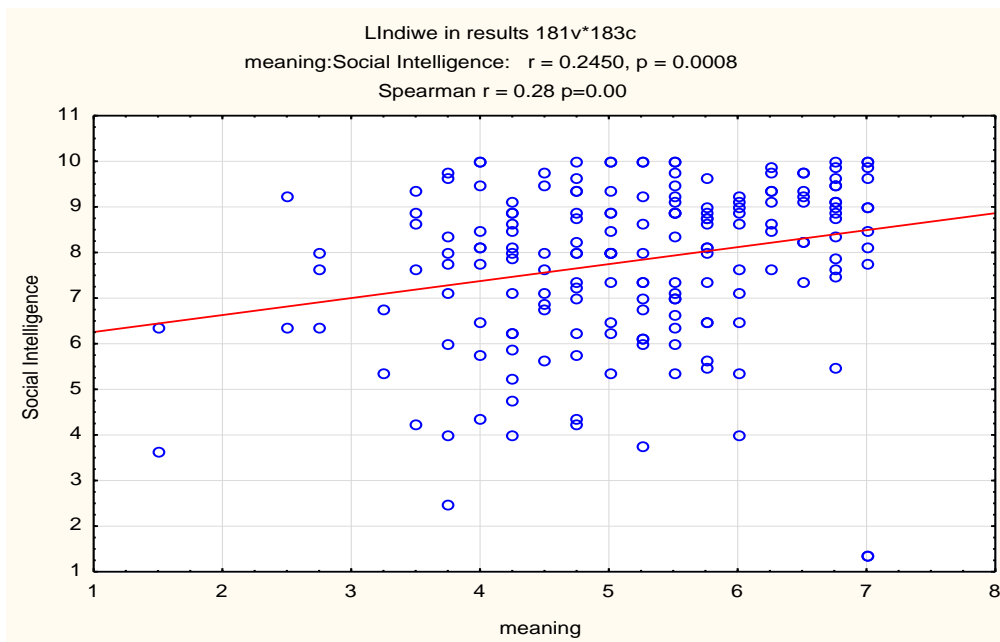


Figure 4.48 Relationship Between Meaning and SI

H49: There is a positive significant relationship between comprehensibility and PWC.

The results of Table 4.4 show a low significant negative correlation between comprehensibility and personal work characteristics ($r=-.42$; $p=.00$) (see Figure 4.49). Based on the results, hypothesis 49 was rejected.

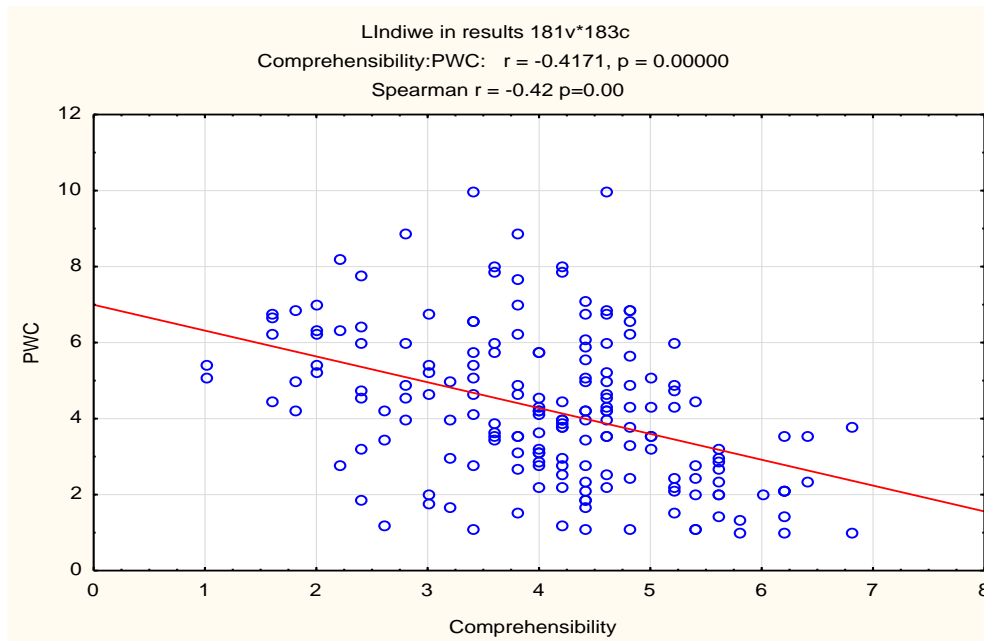


Figure 4.49 Relationship Between Comprehensibility and PWC

H50: There is a positive significant relationship between comprehensibility and OA.

The results of Table 4.4 show a negligible insignificant positive correlation between comprehensibility and organisational acumen ($r=.11$; $p=.15$) (see Figure 4.50). Based on the results, hypothesis 50 was rejected.

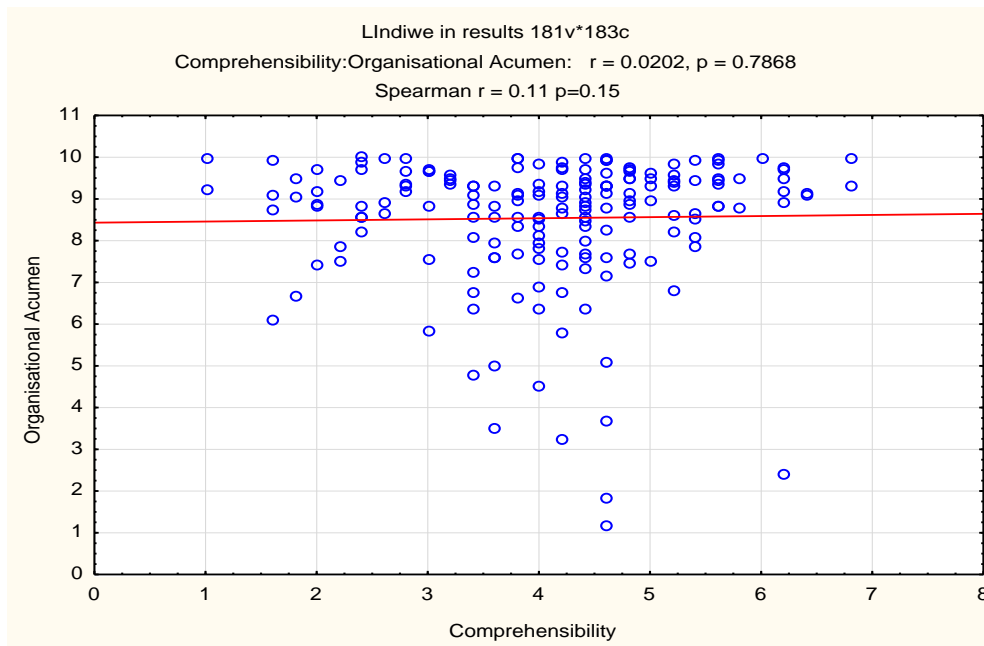


Figure 4.50 Relationship Between Comprehensibility and OA

H51: There is a positive significant relationship between comprehensibility and WC.

The results of Table 4.4 show a low significant positive correlation between comprehensibility and work competence ($r=.23$; $p=.00$) (see Figure 4.51). Based on the results, hypothesis 51 was accepted.

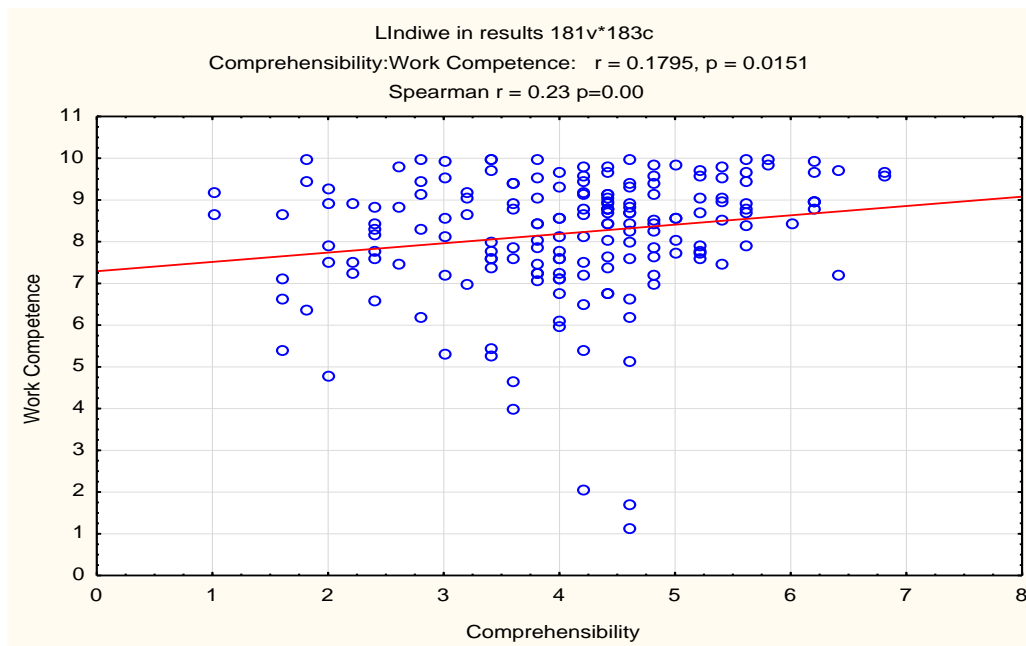


Figure 4.51 Relationship Between Comprehensibility and WC

H52: There is a positive significant relationship between comprehensibility and SI.

The results of Table 4.4 show a negligible insignificant positive correlation between comprehensibility and social intelligence ($r=.13$; $p=.07$) (see Figure 4.52). Based on the results, hypothesis 52 was rejected.

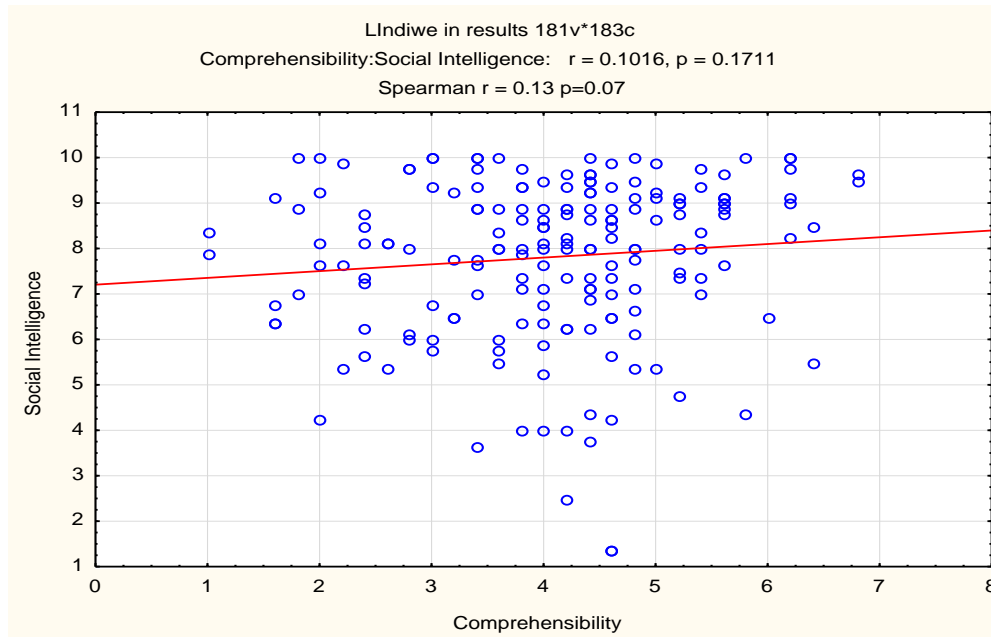


Figure 4.52 Relationship Between Comprehensibility and SI

H53: There is a positive significant relationship between manageability and PWC.

The results of Table 4.4 show a moderate significant negative correlation between manageability and personal work characteristics ($r=-.40$; $p=.00$) (see Figure 4.53). Based on the results, hypothesis 53 was rejected.

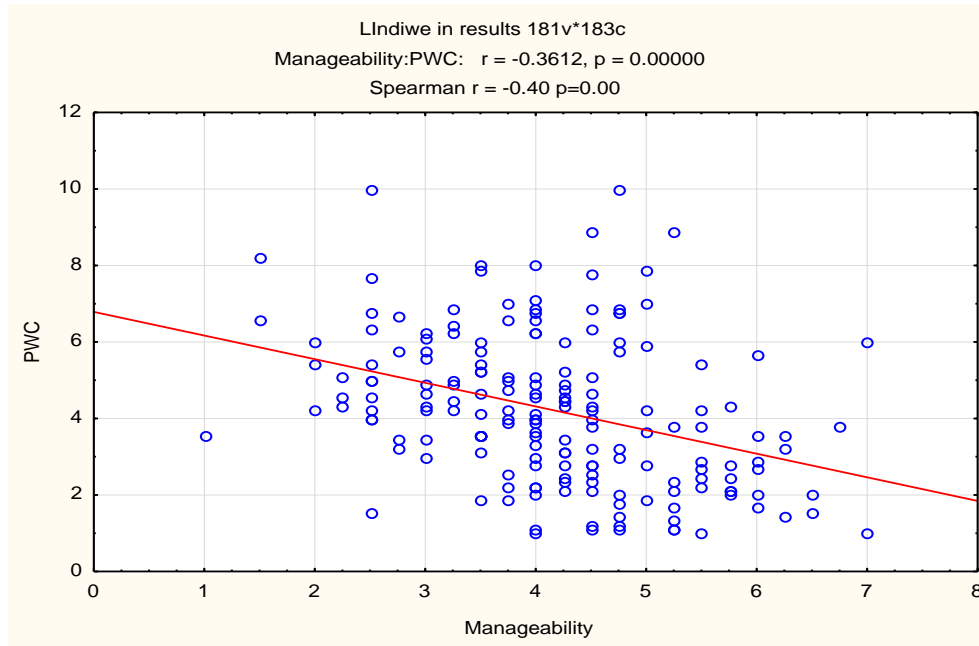


Figure 4.53 Relationship Between Manageability and PWC

H54: There is a positive significant relationship between manageability and OA.

The results of Table 4.4 show a negligible significant positive correlation between manageability and organisational acumen ($r=.19$; $p=.01$) (see Figure 4.54). Based on the results, hypothesis 54 was rejected.

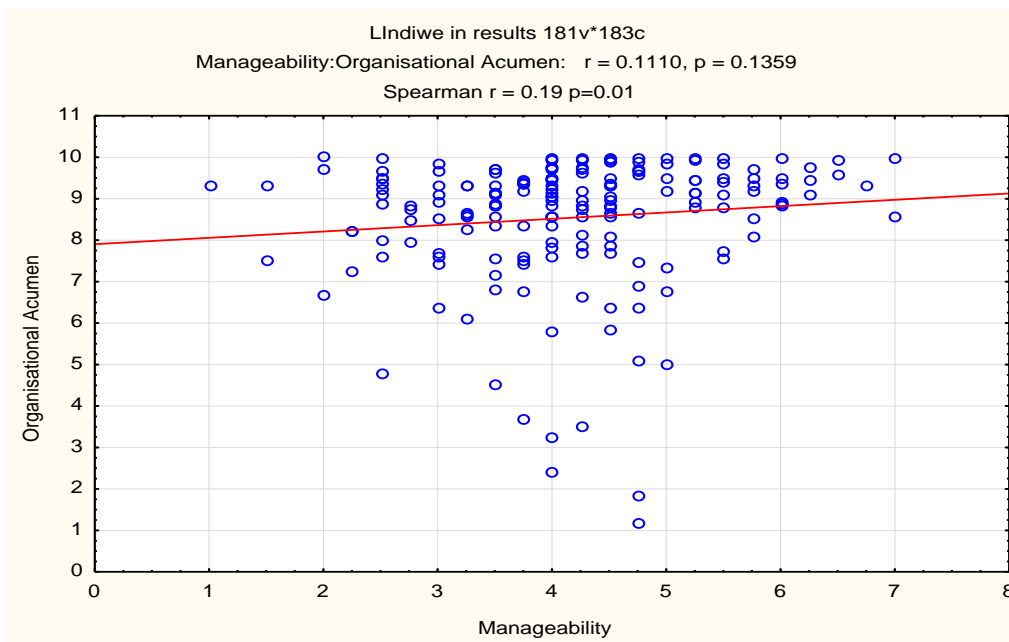


Figure 4.54 Relationship Between Manageability and OA

H55: There is a positive significant relationship between manageability and WC.

The results of Table 4.4 show a negligible significant positive correlation between manageability and work competence ($r=.19$; $p=.01$) (see Figure 4.55). Based on the results, hypothesis 55 was rejected.

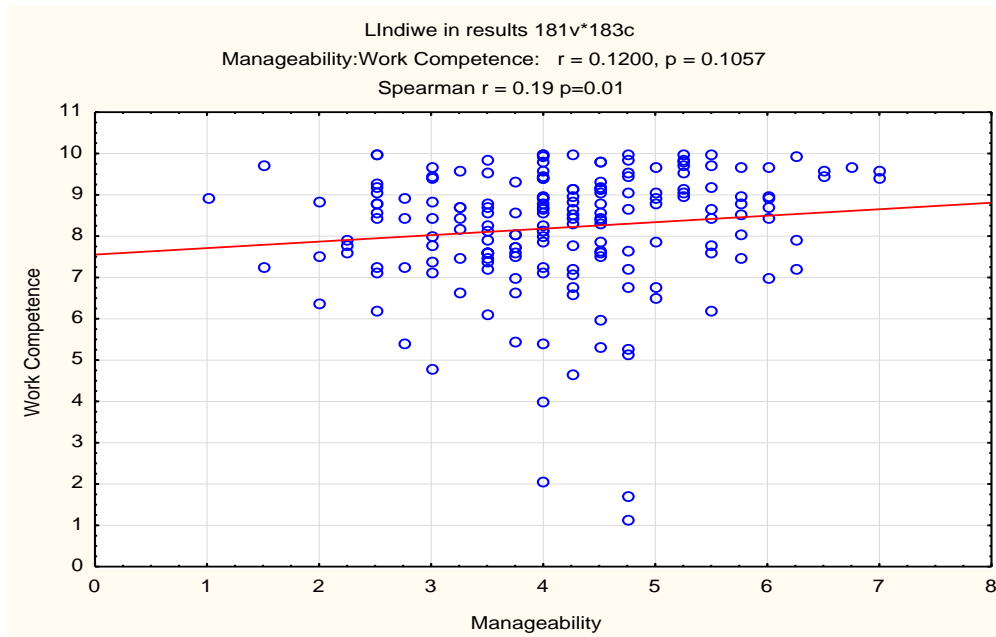


Figure 4.55 Relationship Between Manageability and WC

H56: There is a positive significant relationship between manageability and SI.

The results of Table 4.4 show a negligible insignificant positive correlation between manageability and social intelligence ($r=.13$; $p=.08$) (see Figure 4.56). Based on the results, hypothesis 56 was rejected.

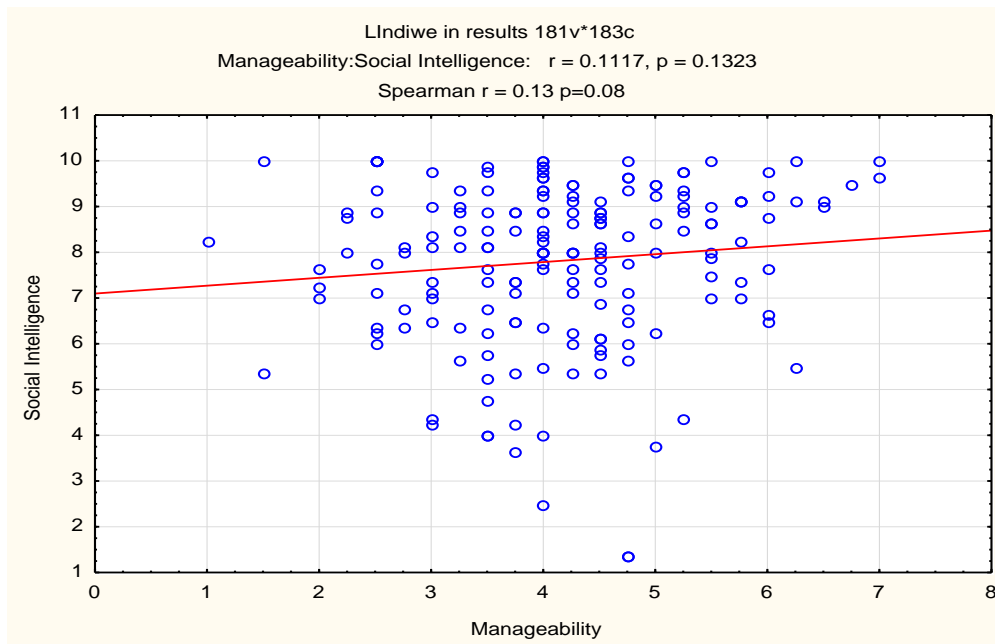


Figure 4.56 Relationship Between Manageability and SI

4.4.2 Multiple regression analysis

Multiple regression analysis allows for predictions of the score of the dependent variable on the basis of scores on several independent variables and identifies the best set of predictor variables (Pallant, 2007). Furthermore, regression analysis can show how well a set of variables is able to predict a particular outcome. In this study, the independent variables of the subscales of EI, SOC and PsyCap were observed to evaluate their contribution in explaining the subscales of WR. Summary statistics for the regression models of OA, PWC, WC and SI are provided followed by a summary discussion of the regression of the models (see Tables 4.5, 4.8, 4.11 and 4.14).

Table 4.5
R² Value and Model Significance in the Prediction of PWC

| Model summary | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Statistic | Value |
| Multiple R | .596 |
| Multiple R ² | .355 |
| Adjusted R ² | .300 |
| F(14,163) | 6.46 |
| p-value | .000 |
| Std error of estimate | 1.636 |

The coefficient of determination (R^2) is used as a measure of goodness of fit of the linear regression, and indicates how much of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by the model (Pallant, 2007). The summary statistics in Table 4.5 revealed that the proportion of the variation in the dependent variable of PWC (subscale of the WR scale) accounted for by the independent variables (the subscales of EI, SOC and PsyCap) is 0.36, meaning that approximately 36% of the variability of PWC is accounted for by all combined predictor variables in the model (see Table 4.5). The adjusted multiple coefficient of determination (adjusted R^2) gives an indication of the variability accounted for by the model after taking into account the number of predictors in the model. In this model, 30% of the variability is accounted for by the model (see Table 4.5). The p-value explains the confidence of each variable in relation to the dependent variable. The p-value for the regression as a whole is statistically significant ($p < .001$). This indicates that the overall model is significant (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.6
Standardised Beta Coefficients in the Prediction of PWC

| Independent variable | Standardised coefficients | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--------|-----|
| | Beta (β) | Std err of beta (β) | t | sig |
| Emotional self-awareness | .600 | .323 | 1.854 | .06 |
| Emotional expression | -.450 | .359 | -1.251 | .21 |
| Emotional awareness of others | -.322 | .366 | -.879 | .38 |
| Emotional reasoning | .329 | .345 | .955 | .34 |
| Emotional self-management | -.280 | .429 | -.652 | .51 |
| Emotional management of others | .007 | .351 | .021 | .98 |
| Emotional control | -.488 | .314 | -1.551 | .12 |
| Efficacy | .043 | .224 | .194 | .84 |
| Hope | -.058 | .239 | -.242 | .80 |
| Resilience | -.278 | .184 | -1.504 | .13 |
| Optimism | -.354 | .227 | -1.559 | .12 |
| Meaning | -.182 | .134 | -1.352 | .17 |
| Comprehensibility | -.385 | .126 | -3.056 | .00 |
| Manageability | -.175 | .134 | -2.298 | .19 |

Evaluating each independent variables (subscales of EI, SOC and PsyCap) indicated which of the variables included in the model (see Figure 4.57) contributed to the prediction of the dependent variables (PWC). Beta values were used to compare the contribution of each independent variable (see Table 4.6). Beta is a measure of how strongly each independent variable influences the dependent variable. The higher the beta value, the greater the impact the independent variable is making on the dependent variable. The p-value and the t-value indicate the amount of contribution the independent variable has in predicting the dependent variable. The smaller the p-value and the larger the t-value, the greater the contribution of that independent variable in predicting the dependent variable.

If the p-value is significant (less than .05), the variable is making a significant unique contribution to the prediction of the dependent variable. If the p-value is insignificant (more than .05), the variable is not making a unique contribution to the prediction of the dependent variable (Pallant, 2007). The standardised beta coefficients in Table 4.6 indicated that, although ESA has the strongest contribution to the prediction of PWC, this contribution was insignificant.

Comprehensibility, with the fourth highest impact of the dependent variable (PWC), was the only independent variable that made a significant and negative unique contribution to the prediction of PWC. For this model (see Figure 4.57), comprehensibility ($\beta=.385$, $t=-3.056$, $p=.00$) is the only significant predictor of PWC. All the other independent variables showed no significance in predicting PWC.

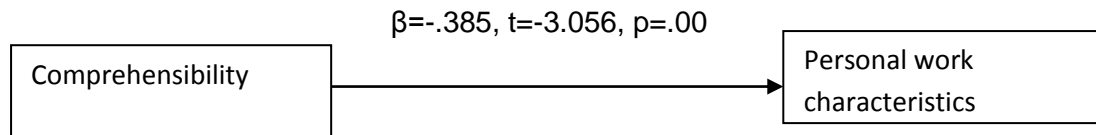


Figure 4.57 Personal work characteristics

4.4.2.1 Multicollinearity of personal work characteristics

In order for inferences to be made based on the conclusions of the regression analysis, certain assumptions must be met. One of these assumptions is that there should not be perfect linear relationships between two or more of the predictors (Pallant, 2007). If there is high correlation between independent variables it means that they are explaining the same part of the variation in the dependent variable. Table 4.7 presents the results of the analysis of multicollinearity. The tolerance is an indicator of how much of the variability of the specific independent variable is not explained by the other independent variables (Pallant, 2007). Tolerance values below 0.1 call for concern, while values above 0.2 are considered significant. The results in Table 4.10 indicate that all the independent variables exceeded the 0.2 threshold. This means that all the independent variables explain different aspects of PWC.

Table 4.7
PWC Redundancy of Independent Variable

| Variables | Tolerance | R ² | Partial correlations | Semi-partial correlations |
|--------------------------------|-----------|----------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| Emotional self-awareness | .450 | .549 | .143 | .116 |
| Emotional expression | .477 | .522 | -.097 | -.078 |
| Emotional awareness of others | .431 | .568 | -.097 | -.055 |
| Emotional reasoning | .535 | .464 | .074 | .059 |
| Emotional self-management | .331 | .668 | -.050 | -.040 |
| Emotional management of others | .430 | .569 | .001 | .001 |
| Emotional self-control | .491 | .508 | -.120 | -.097 |
| Efficacy | .473 | .526 | .015 | .012 |
| Hope | .425 | .574 | -.018 | -.015 |
| Resilience | .670 | .329 | -.116 | -.094 |
| Optimism | .549 | .450 | -.120 | -.097 |
| Meaning | .608 | .391 | -.105 | -.084 |
| Comprehensibility | .674 | .325 | -.232 | -.191 |
| Manageability | .643 | .356 | -.100 | -.081 |

4.4.2.2 Testing for normality: personal work characteristics

The second assumption that needs to be satisfied in order for inferences to be made based on the conclusions of the regression analysis, is normality. The normal probability plot is a graphical technique for normality testing, that is, assessing whether or not the data set is normally distributed (Pallant, 2007). If the points on the normal P-P lie in a reasonably straight diagonal line, it suggests that there are no major deviations from normality (Pallant, 2007). Data in Figure 4.58 indicates that there are no major deviations from normality as shown by the straight diagonal line. This can be interpreted as an indication of a normal distribution.

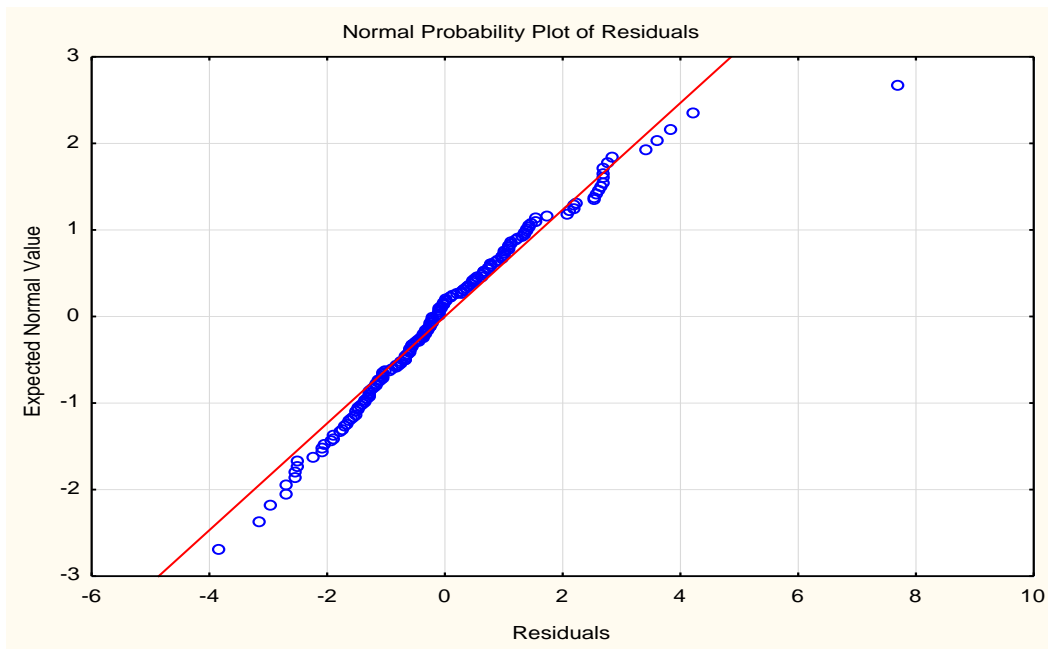


Figure 4.58 Normal Probability Plot (P-P) for PWC

The next section focuses on the results of the multiple regression analysis of the independent variables, the subscales of EI, SOC and PsyCap and the dependent variable, OA (see Table 4.8).

Table 4.8

R² Value and Model Significance in Prediction of OA

| Model summary | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Statistic | Value |
| Multiple R | .501 |
| Multiple R ² | .251 |
| Adjusted R ² | .183 |
| F(14,163) | 3.83 |
| p-value | 0.000 |
| Std error of estimate | 1.411 |

The summary statistics in Table 4.8 revealed that the proportion of variance in the dependent variable of OA (subscale of the WR scale) accounted for by the independent variables (the subscales of EI, SOC and PsyCap) is 0.25, meaning that approximately 25% of the variability of OA is accounted for by all combined predictor variables in the model (see Figure 4.59). In this model, 18% of the variability is accounted for by the model (see Figure 4.59).

The p-value for the regression as a whole is statistically significant ($p = .000$). This indicates that the overall model is significant (see Figure 4.59).

Table 4.9
Standardised Beta Coefficients in the Prediction of OA

| Independent variable | Standardised coefficients | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--------|-----|
| | Beta (β) | Std err of beta (β) | t | sig |
| Emotional self-awareness | -.113 | .279 | -.406 | .68 |
| Emotional expression | .694 | .312 | 2.223 | .02 |
| Emotional awareness of others | -.231 | .319 | -.723 | .47 |
| Emotional reasoning | -.876 | .299 | -2.928 | .00 |
| Emotional self –management | .556 | .369 | 1.504 | .13 |
| Emotional management of others | -.288 | .303 | -.950 | .34 |
| Emotional control | .187 | .271 | .691 | .48 |
| Efficacy | .292 | .193 | 1.509 | .13 |
| Hope | .282 | .207 | 1.360 | .17 |
| Resilience | -.016 | .159 | -.102 | .91 |
| Optimism | .434 | .195 | 2.224 | .02 |
| Meaning | .054 | .115 | .473 | .63 |
| Comprehensibility | -.193 | .109 | -1.770 | .07 |
| Manageability | .069 | .116 | .599 | .54 |

The standardised beta coefficients in Table 4.9 indicated that emotional reasoning (ER) makes the strongest and negative contribution to the prediction of OA, followed by emotional expression (EE) and optimism, respectively. The contributions made by these independent variables (ER, EE and optimism) were also significantly unique. For this model (see Figure 4.59), ER ($\beta = -0.876$, $t = -2.928$, $p = .00$), EE ($\beta = .694$, $t = 2.223$, $p = .02$) and optimism ($\beta = .434$, $t = 2.224$, $p = .02$) are significant predictors of OA. All the other independent variables showed no significance in predicting OA.

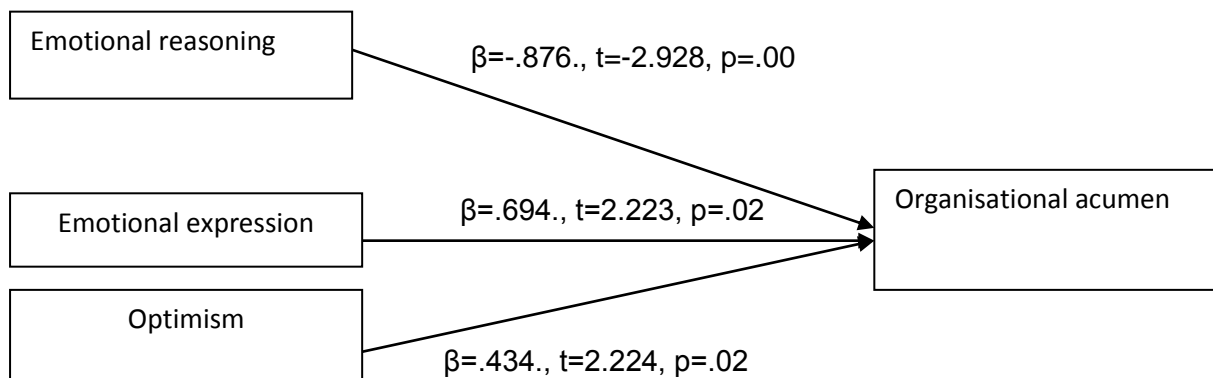


Figure 4.59 Organisational acumen

4.4.2.3 Multicollinearity of organisational acumen

The results in Table 4.10 indicate that the tolerance values of the independent variables range from .3 to .6. Emotional self-management indicates the lowest tolerance value. This could possibly mean that ESM shares some of its variability with the other independent variables. However, this value exceeds the 0.2 threshold; therefore, it will be taken that all the independent variables explain various aspects of OA.

Table 4.10
OA Redundancy of Independent Variable

| Variables | Tolerance | R ² | Partial correlation | Semi-partial correlations |
|--------------------------------|-----------|----------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Emotional self-awareness | .454 | .545 | -.031 | -.027 |
| Emotional expression | .468 | .531 | .171 | .151 |
| Emotional awareness of others | .420 | .579 | -.056 | -.049 |
| Emotional reasoning | .537 | .462 | -.223 | -.198 |
| Emotional self-management | .337 | .662 | .117 | .102 |
| Emotional management of others | .432 | .567 | -.074 | -.064 |
| Emotional self-control | .497 | .502 | .054 | .046 |
| Efficacy | .471 | .528 | .117 | .102 |
| Hope | .428 | .571 | .105 | .092 |
| Resilience | .677 | .322 | -.008 | -.006 |
| Optimism | .556 | .443 | .171 | .151 |
| Meaning | .610 | .389 | .037 | .032 |
| Comprehensibility | .666 | .333 | -.137 | -.120 |
| Manageability | .644 | .355 | .046 | .040 |

4.4.2.4 Testing for normality OA

Data in Figure 4.60 indicates a slight deviation from normality as seen by the data falling slightly away from the straight diagonal line.

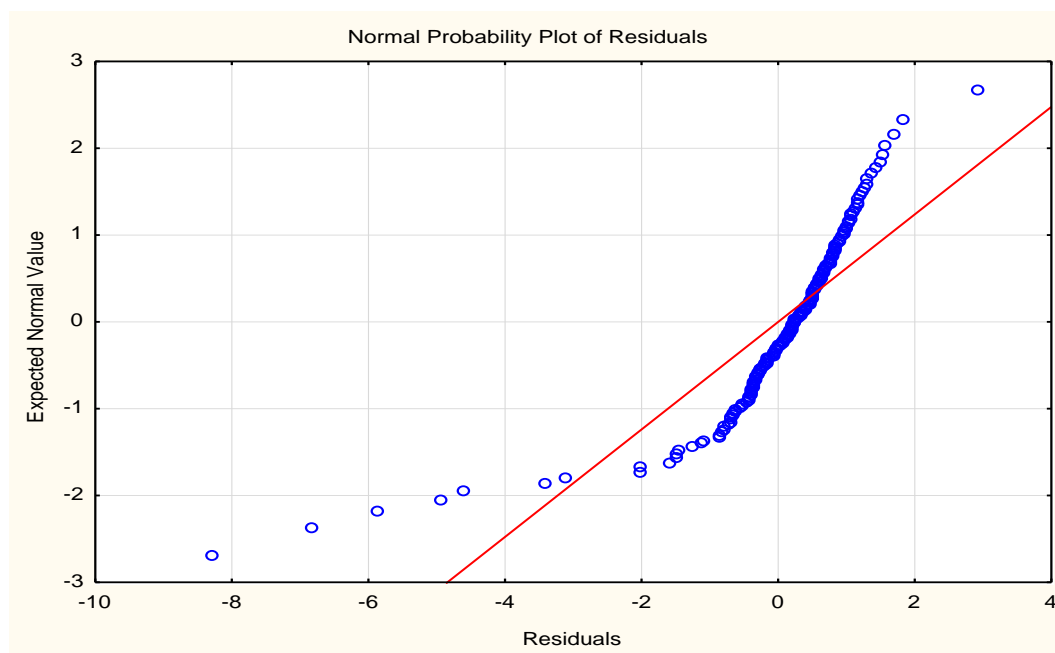


Figure 4.60 Normal Probability Plot (P-P) for OA

The next section focuses on the results of the multiple regression analysis of the independent variables, the subscales of EI, SOC and PsyCap and the dependent variable, WC (see Table 4.11).

Table 4.11
R² Value and Model Significance in the Prediction of WC

| Model summary | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Statistic | Value |
| Multiple R | .521 |
| Multiple R ² | .272 |
| Adjusted R ² | .210 |
| F(14,163) | 4.386 |
| p-value | .000 |
| Std error of estimate | 1.308 |

The summary statistics in Table 4.11 revealed that the proportion of the variance in the dependent variable of WC (subscale of the WR scale) accounted for by the independent variables (the subscales of EI, SOC and PsyCap) is 0.27, meaning that approximately 27% of the variability of WC is accounted for by all combined predictor variables in the model (see Figure 4.61). In this model, 21% of the variability is accounted for by the model (see Figure 4.61). The p-value for the regression as a whole is statistically significant ($p=.000$). This indicates that the overall model is significant (see Figure 4.61).

Table 4.12
Standardised Beta Coefficients in the Prediction of WC

| Independent variable | Standardised coefficients | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--------|-----|
| | Beta (β) | Std err of beta (β) | t | sig |
| Emotional self-awareness | -.469 | .259 | -1.810 | .07 |
| Emotional expression | .499 | .287 | 1.737 | .08 |
| Emotional awareness of others | -.722 | .293 | -.247 | .80 |
| Emotional reasoning | -.405 | .275 | -1.468 | .14 |
| Emotional self-management | -.691 | .343 | 2.010 | .04 |
| Emotional management of others | -.239 | .281 | -.852 | .39 |
| Emotional control | -.012 | .251 | -.048 | .96 |
| Efficacy | .561 | .179 | 3.131 | .00 |
| Hope | .188 | .191 | .984 | .32 |
| Resilience | -.189 | .147 | -1.284 | .20 |
| Optimism | .355 | .181 | 1.956 | .05 |
| Meaning | -.023 | .107 | -.218 | .82 |
| Comprehensibility | .112 | .100 | 1.115 | .26 |
| Manageability | -.003 | .107 | -.036 | .97 |

The standardised beta coefficients in Table 4.12 indicated that emotional self-management (ESM) makes the strongest and negative contribution to the prediction of WC, followed by efficacy. The contributions made by these independent variables (efficacy and ESM) were also significantly unique contributions. For this model (see Figure 4.61), efficacy ($\beta = 0.561$, $t = 3.131$, $p = .00$) and ESM ($\beta = -.691$, $t = 2.010$, $p = .04$) are significant predictors of WC. All the other independent variables showed no significance in predicting WC.

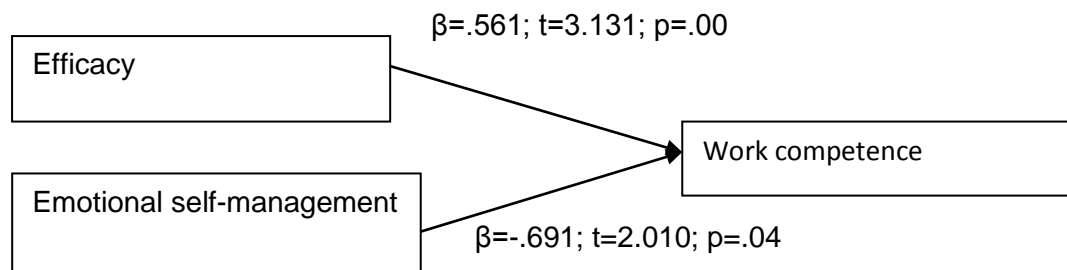


Figure 4.61 Work competence

4.4.2.5 Multicollinearity of work competence

The results in Table 4.13 indicate that the tolerance values of the independent variables range from .331 to .674. Emotional self-management indicates the lowest tolerance value (.331). However, this value is not below the 0.2 threshold; therefore, it will be taken that all the independent variables explain various aspects of WC.

Table 4.13
WC Redundancy of Independent Variable

| Variables | Tolerance | R ² | Partial correlation | Semi-partial correlations |
|--------------------------------|-----------|----------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Emotional self-awareness | .450 | .549 | -.139 | -.120 |
| Emotional expression | .477 | .522 | .134 | .115 |
| Emotional awareness of others | .431 | .568 | -.019 | -.016 |
| Emotional reasoning | .535 | .464 | -.113 | -.097 |
| Emotional self-management | .331 | .668 | .155 | .133 |
| Emotional management of others | .430 | .668 | -.066 | -.56 |
| Emotional self-control | .491 | .569 | -.003 | -.003 |
| Efficacy | .473 | .508 | .237 | .208 |
| Hope | .425 | .536 | .076 | .065 |
| Resilience | .670 | .329 | -.099 | -.805 |
| Optimism | .549 | .450 | .151 | .130 |
| Meaning | .608 | .391 | -.017 | -.014 |
| Comprehensibility | .674 | .325 | .086 | .074 |
| Manageability | .643 | .356 | -.002 | -.002 |

4.4.2.6 Testing for normality WC

The distribution of the data (see Figure 4.62) indicates deviations from a straight diagonal line. Normal distribution is not confirmed for WC.

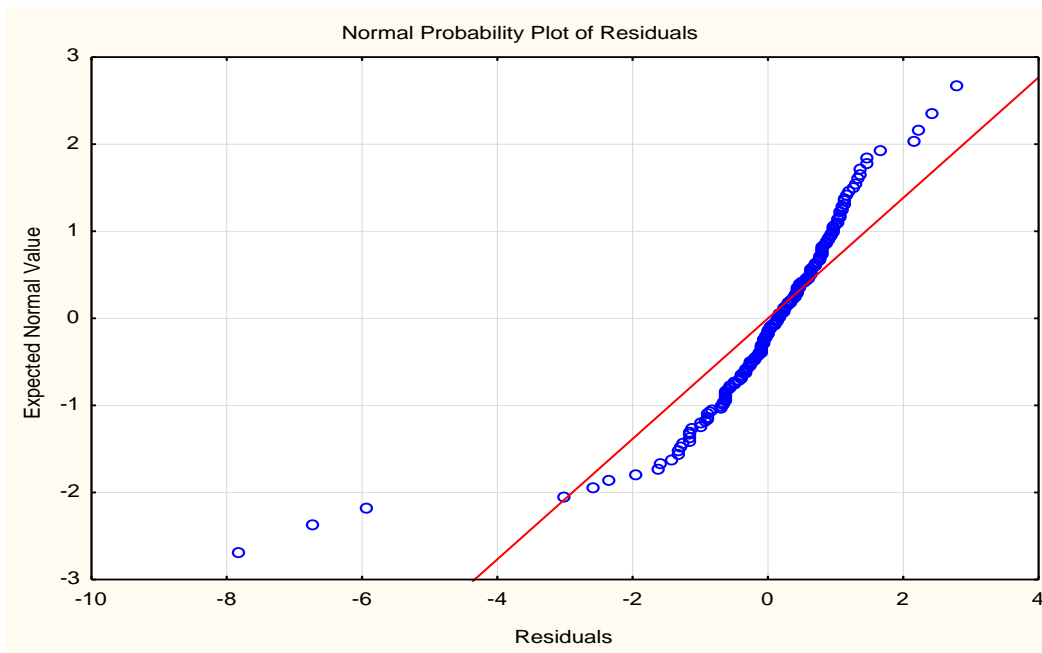


Figure 4 62 Normal Probability Plot (P-P) for WC

The next section focuses on the results of the multiple regression analysis of the independent variables, the subscales of EI, SOC and PsyCap and the dependent variable SI (see Table 4.14).

Table 4.14

R² Value and Model Significance in the Prediction of SI

| Model summary | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Statistic | Value |
| Multiple R | .464 |
| Multiple R ² | .215 |
| Adjusted R ² | .148 |
| F(14,163) | 3.225 |
| p-value | 0.000 |
| Std error of estimate | 1.621 |

The summary statistics in Table 4.14 revealed that the proportion of the variance in the dependent variable SI (subscale of the WR scale) accounted for by the independent variables (the subscales of EI, SOC and PsyCap) is 0.22, meaning that approximately 22% of the variability of SI is accounted for by all combined predictor variables in the model (see Figure 4. 63). In this model, 15% of the variability is accounted for by the model (see Figure 4.63). The p-value for the regression as a whole is statistically significant ($p=.000$). This indicates that the overall model is significant (see Figure 4.63).

Table 4.15
Standardised Beta coefficients in the Prediction of SI

| Independent variable | Standardised coefficients | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--------|-----|
| | Beta (β) | Std err of beta (β) | t | sig |
| Emotional self-awareness | -.578 | .321 | -1.802 | .07 |
| Emotional expression | .344 | .356 | .966 | .33 |
| Emotional awareness of others | -.266 | .363 | -.733 | .46 |
| Emotional reasoning | -.450 | .342 | -1.316 | .18 |
| Emotional self-management | .522 | .425 | 1.226 | .22 |
| Emotional management of others | .529 | .348 | 1.519 | .13 |
| Emotional control | -.311 | .311 | -.998 | .31 |
| Efficacy | .662 | .222 | 2.982 | .00 |
| Hope | .103 | .237 | .438 | .66 |
| Resilience | -.298 | .183 | -1.631 | .10 |
| Optimism | .359 | .225 | 1.596 | .11 |
| Meaning | .092 | .133 | .692 | .48 |
| Comprehensibility | -.010 | .124 | -.808 | .93 |
| Manageability | .143 | .133 | 1.076 | .28 |

The standardised beta coefficients in Table 4.15 indicated that efficacy made the strongest contribution to the prediction of SI. The contribution by efficacy in predicting SI was significantly unique. For this model (see Figure 4.63), efficacy ($\beta=.662$, $t=2.982$, $p=.00$) was the only significant predictor of SI. All the other independent variables showed no significance in predicting SI.

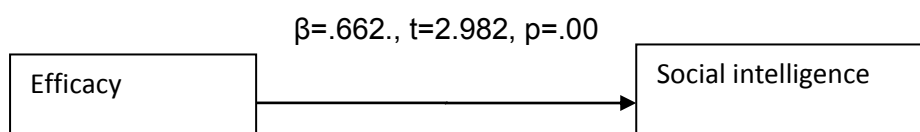


Figure 4.63 Social intelligence

4.4.2.7 Multicollinearity of social intelligence

The results in Table 4.16 indicate that the tolerance values of the independent variables range from .331 to .674. Emotional self-management indicates the lowest tolerance value (.331). However, this value is not below the 0.2 threshold; therefore, it will be taken that all the independent variables explain various aspects of SI.

Table 4.16
SI Redundancy of Independent Variable

| Variables | Tolerance | R ² | Partial correlation | Semi-partial correlations |
|--------------------------------|-----------|----------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Emotional self-awareness | .450 | .549 | -.139 | -.124 |
| Emotional expression | .477 | .522 | .075 | .066 |
| Emotional awareness of others | .431 | .568 | -.057 | -.050 |
| Emotional reasoning | .535 | .464 | -.102 | -.091 |
| Emotional self-management | .331 | .668 | .095 | .084 |
| Emotional management of others | .430 | .569 | .117 | .105 |
| Emotional self-control | .491 | .508 | .226 | -.069 |
| Efficacy | .473 | .526 | .034 | .206 |
| Hope | .425 | .574 | -.034 | .030 |
| Resilience | .670 | .329 | -.126 | -.112 |
| Optimism | .549 | .450 | .123 | .110 |
| Meaning | .608 | .391 | .053 | .047 |
| Comprehensibility | .674 | .325 | -.006 | -.005 |
| Manageability | .643 | .356 | .083 | .074 |

4.4.2.8 Testing for normality SI

The distribution of the data in (see Figure 4.64) indicates that there are no major deviations as indicated by from the straight diagonal line. It can therefore confirmed that data is normally distributed

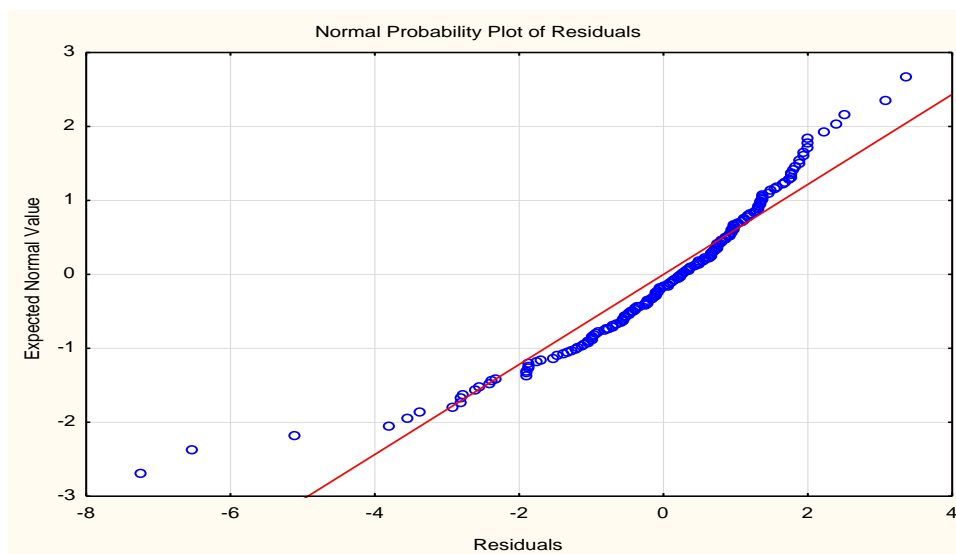


Figure 4 64 Normal Probability Plot (P-P) for SI

4.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The purpose of this chapter was to report on the different statistical analyses that were undertaken in analysing the data. The demographics of the data were illustrated by using descriptive statistics analysis. Statistical analysis included item analysis to evaluate the reliability of scales. Correlations were done using the Spearman correlation coefficient to reveal the nature of the relationships between the different variables. Significant moderate correlations were found between EI (ESM) and WR (OA), PsyCap (efficacy) and WR (WC), PsyCap (hope) and WR (OA and WC); PsyCap (optimism) and WR (PWC, OA and WC).

Significant lower correlations were found between EI (ESA) and WR (OA); EI (EE) and WR (OA, WC, & SI); EI (EAO) and WR (OA & WC); EI (ER) and WR (OA, WC & SI); EI (ESM) and WR (OA, WC & SI); EI (ESMO) AND WR (OA, WC, & SI); EI (ESC) AND WR (OA & WC); PSYCAP (efficacy) and WR (OA & SI); PSYCAP (hope) and WR (SI); PSYCAP (optimism) and WR (SI); SOC (meaning) and WR (OA, WC & SI); SOC (comprehensibility) and WR (WC). As a result the following hypothesis were accepted: H2, H6, H7, H8, H10, H11, H14, H15, H16, H18, H19, H20, H22, H23, H24, H26, H27, H30, H31, H32, H34, H35, H36, H38, H39, H42, H43, H44, H46, H47, 48 and H51.

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to investigate the combined effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The results for the personal work characteristics (PWC) model indicated that 36% of PW can be accounted for by subscales of EI, SOC and PsyCap. The standardised coefficients of the independent variable indicated that comprehensibility ($\beta=-.385$; $p=.00$) had the fourth strongest and significant contribution in predicting PWC. The results of the organisational acumen (OA) model indicated that 25% of OA can be accounted for by the subscales of EI, SOC and PsyCap. The standardised coefficients of the independent variable indicate that emotional reasoning ($\beta=-0.876$; $p=.00$), emotional expression ($\beta=0.694$; $p=0.02$) and optimism ($\beta=0.434$; $p=0.02$) made the most unique and the most significant contribution in predicting organisational acumen. The results of the work competence (WC) model indicated that 27% of WC can be accounted for by the subscales of EI, SOC and PsyCap. The standardised coefficients of the independent variables indicate that efficacy ($\beta=0.561$; $p=0.00$) and emotional self-management ($\beta=-.691$; $p=0.04$) made the most unique and the most significant contributions in predicting work competence.

The results of the social intelligence (SI) model indicated that 22% of SI can be accounted for by the subscales of EI and PsyCap. The standardised coefficients of the independent variables indicate that efficacy ($\beta=0.662$; $p=0.00$) had the highest and most significant unique contribution in predicting SI.

In summary, the statistical analysis showed that the personal resources of EI, SOC and PsyCap, which proved to have a relationship with WR, include emotional reasoning, emotional expression, emotional self-management, optimism, efficacy and comprehensibility.

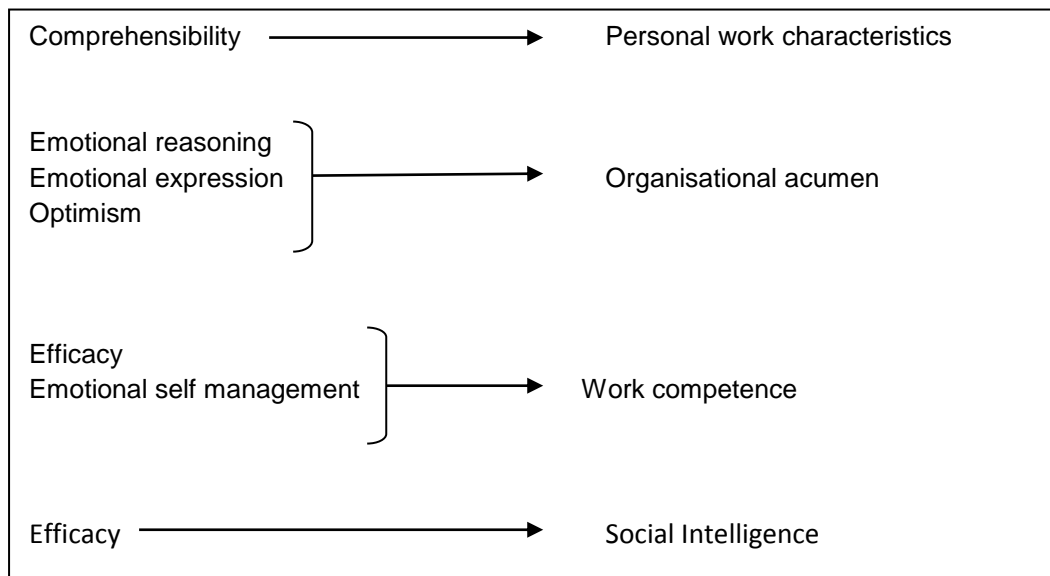


Figure 4.65 Empirical Models of EI, SOC, PsyCap and WR

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 presented the results of the statistical analysis performed on a sample of 183 students from three universities in Africa. The aim of this chapter is to discuss the research results of chapter 4. The chapter commences with a discussion of the correlation results (see par 4.4.1) between the personal resources of EI, SOC and PsyCap and WR of graduates. Furthermore multiple regression analysis (see par 4.4.2) between the predictors (subscales of EI, SOC and PsyCap) and the dependent variable (subscales of WR) is discussed.

5.2 DISCUSSION OF CORRELATIONS RESULTS

The aim of this study (see par 1.3) was to show the potential relationships between the personal resources (EI, SOC and PsyCap) and work readiness. Hypotheses were formulated (see par 3.2) to test these relationships. Although not all the hypotheses that were formulated were accepted, this study provided some understanding of the kind of personal resources that influence the work readiness of graduates.

The nature of work is changing and the requirements to succeed in the work environment are no longer confined to obtaining a qualification. According to Jorgensen (2004), a qualification does not automatically translate into the kind of competencies valued by today's labour markets. In addition to obtaining a university qualification, graduates are required to develop generic skills. Generic skills encompass a wide variety of competencies, attitudes and resources. In essence these generic skills are considered to go hand in hand with one's accumulated knowledge in order to produce a well rounded graduate who is sufficiently prepared for the work environment. Personal resources, such as emotional intelligence, a sense of coherence and a strong psychological capital, may contribute to promoting graduates' WR because a person's ability to deal with the challenges inherent in the work environment will be enhanced.

The experiences of a new work environment can be traumatic for anyone, more so for recent graduates and that may hinder their performance.

Employers appoint graduates with the expectation that their knowledge will translate into positive returns valued by the organisation, however, exposure to a new culture, unrealistic expectations, and toxic interpersonal relationships as well as other factors, such as the challenges associated with being in a certain life/career stage, can all delay that process.

The personal resources of EI, SOC and PsyCap may play an instrumental role in reducing the effects of these experiences on the performance of the graduates. According to Davidson et al., (2012) there is a direct relationship between one's levels of SOC and the person's ability to employ cognitive, emotional and instrumental strategies that are likely to improve coping. Gooty et al. (2009) found that the higher the levels of PsyCap, the more able an employee will be to move forward when faced with everyday work hassles. PsyCap has also been conceptually and empirically demonstrated to be related to employee performance (Peterson et al., 2011, Toor & Ofori, 2010). The ability to recognize, express and control emotions (aspects of EI) may have an impact on the perceived job stress and the consequences of experienced stress (Oginska-Bulik, 2005a).

For the sake of simplicity and for practical reasons (reducing the number of discussion pages), in this study, the results are presented in a group format. Firstly the results are separated into the three groups of the independent variables EI, SOC and PsyCap. In each group the results of the correlation between the subscales of the dependent variable (WR) and its proposed relationships with the subscales of the independent variables are presented and discussed.

5.2.1 Emotional intelligence and work readiness

Personal work characteristics: Only negative correlations were found between the subscales of EI and PWC. H1 stating that there is a positive, significant relationship between emotional self awareness and personal work characteristics ($r = -.29$; $p = .00$), H5 stating that there is a significant positive relationship between emotional expression and personal work characteristics ($r = -.37$; $p = .00$), H9 stating that there is a positive significant relationship between emotional awareness of others and personal work characteristics ($r = -.35$; $p = .00$), H13 stating that there is a positive relationship between emotional reasoning and personal work characteristics ($r = -.23$; $p = .00$), H17 stating that there is a significant positive relationship between emotional self management and personal work characteristics ($r = -.36$, $p = .00$), H21 stating that there is a positive, significant relationship between emotional self management of others and personal work characteristics ($r = -.30$; $p = .00$), and H25 stating

that there is a significant positive relationship between emotional self control and personal work characteristics ($r = -.38$; $p=.00$), were rejected.

The summary statistics (see Table 4.2) indicated low significant negative correlations. These findings seem to contradict literature on behaviours indicative of personal work characteristics. According to Lopes, et al. (2004) the capacity to regulate one's own emotions seems to be linked to a broader capacity for self control, including the control of impulsive behaviour. Furthermore, Mayer and Salovey (1997), indicate that the ability to manage emotions can help people to nurture positive affect, avoid being overwhelmed by negative affect, and cope with stress. These negative findings could possibly be due to the fact that the items in PWC subscale are negatively worded. This may have resulted in different interpretations of what PWC entails. Another possible reason could be the issue of culture and the expression of emotions in the work setting. According to Ekaman and Friesens (as cited in Matsumoto, 1993) the display of emotions differs across cultures depending on the social situation. It could therefore be that in this predominantly African sample, the expression of emotions in a work environment setting can be considered unacceptable, in that case emotions will not be considered as part of one's personal work characteristics.

Organisational acumen: H2 stating that there is a positive relationship between emotional self awareness and organisational acumen ($r = .30$; $p=.00$); H6 stating that there is a positive relationship between emotional expression and organisational acumen ($r = .37$; $p= .00$); H10 stating that there is a positive relationship between emotional awareness of others and organisational acumen ($r = .33$; $p= .00$); H14 stating that there is a positive relationship between emotional reasoning and organisational acumen ($r = .20$; $p= .01$); H18 stating that there is a positive relationship between emotional self management and organisational acumen; H21 stating that there is positive relationship between emotional self management of others and organisational acumen ($r = .23$; $p=.00$) and H26 stating that there is a positive relationship between emotional self control and organisational acumen ($r = .29$; $p=.00$), were accepted. The summary statistics (see Table 4.2) indicate low significant positive correlations. All the subscales of EI were found to be positively correlated with the OA. These results are in line with previous research findings on behaviours indicative of organisational acumen. For example Utami et al. (2013) found that individuals with higher EI will have a higher organisational commitment even when they perceived a high political nature inside the organisation. Nikolaou and Tsaousis (2000), found a positive correlation between EI and organisational commitment.

Work competence: H7 stating that there is a positive relationship between emotional expression and work competence ($r = .33$; $p = .00$), H11 stating that there is a positive relationship between emotional awareness of others and work competence ($r = .29$; $p = .00$), H15 stating that there is a positive relationship between emotional reasoning and work competence ($r = .28$; $p = .00$), H19 stating that there is a positive relationship between emotional self management and work competence ($r = .37$, $p = .00$), H23 stating that there is a positive relationship between emotional management of others and work competence ($r = .24$; $p = .00$), H27 stating that there is a positive relationship between emotional self control and work competence ($r = .24$; $p = .00$), were accepted. The summary statistics (see Table 4.2) indicated low significant positive correlations. Findings are consistent with previous studies of Carmelia and Josman (2006), who found significant and positive relationships between appraisal and expression of emotions. They also found that regulation of emotions was significantly related to task performance. H3 stating that there is a positive relationship between emotional self awareness and work competence ($r = .19$; $p = .00$), was rejected. The finding of a negative relationship between emotional self awareness and work competence seems to be in contrast with previous research findings on behaviours indicative of work competence, such as problem solving, for example Arefnasab et al. (2012), found significant positive relationship between EI and problem solving strategies.

Social intelligence: H8 stating that there is a positive relationship between emotional expression and social intelligence ($r = .25$; $p = .00$), H16 stating that there is a positive relationship between emotional reasoning and social intelligence, ($r = .23$; $p = .00$), H20 stating that there is a positive relationship between emotional self management and social intelligence ($r = .29$; $p = .00$) and H24 stating that there is a positive relationship between emotional self management of others and social intelligence ($r = .26$; $p = .00$), were accepted. The summary statistics (see Table 4.2) indicated low significant positive correlations. In essence, this means emotional expression, emotional reasoning and emotional self management have a positive relationship with WR, more specifically, the subscale of SI. This is in line with findings by Nelis et al. (2011), who investigated how EI improves psychological and physical wellbeing, social relationships and employability. Negligible and insignificant relationships were also found between the subscales of EI and the subscales of WR. H4 stating that there is a positive relationship between emotional self awareness and social intelligence ($r = .12$; $p = .11$), H12 stating that there is a positive relationship between emotional awareness of others and social intelligence ($r = .19$; $p = .01$) and H28 stating that there is a positive relationship between emotional self control and social intelligence ($r = .13$; $p = .08$) were rejected. The summary statistic (see Table 4.2) indicated a negligibly significant positive correlation with social intelligence.

The possible reason for these findings could be attributed to the typical stereotypes associated with emotions in interpersonal relationships, more so in working environments. Furthermore, it is possible that the participants in this study could not link the awareness of own and other emotions with behaviours indicative of social intelligence.

Despite not having accepted all the hypothesised relationships, the findings of positive relationships have benefits for the graduates. The significance of these findings on graduates' work readiness lies in the role that emotional intelligence plays in interpersonal relationships and the management of emotions at the workplace. The motive to include EI as part of personal resources that may contribute to the work readiness of graduates stemmed from the plethora of literature indicating how the ability to manage one's and other's emotions can have significant outcomes for the performance of the individual, as well as the organisation (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Lopes et al., 2004; Arefnasab et al., 2012). The ability to manage emotions is expected to improve work readiness of graduates because the ability to manage emotions is strongly associated with the quality of everyday social interactions (Lopes, et al., 2004). In the work environment dealing with other people, be it clients or co-workers, is crucial to the success of the organisation. Possessing the ability to appropriately regulate and manage emotions, is critical to the success of the organisation because according to Fenwick (as cited in Suliman & Al-Shaikh, 2007) emotions play an important role in the employee's readiness to create and innovate

Because graduates tend to hold unrealistic expectations about their work environment, the disappointment that comes with the reality may negatively impact on their performance. According to Wendlandt and Rochlen (2009) graduates tend to hold unrealistic expectations of the workplace and their role as employees and this could result in undesired outcomes such as role stress. Results of unmet expectations are associated with negative consequences such as tenure and lack of commitment (Arnold et al., 2002). Possessing the ability to express appropriate emotions, manage one's temper and not dwell on negative emotions when encountering experiences of unmet expectations will make the process of adapting to one's new environment easier and subsequently reduce the experience of role stress. According to Oginska-Bulik (2005a) the ability to recognize, express and control emotions may also have an impact on the perceived job stress and the consequences of experiencing stress.

Further benefits that may lead to improved work readiness of graduates include the ability to regulate one's emotions which is likely to influence the emotional valence of social interactions, because we infer people's intentions from their emotional cues and use that information to guide our own behaviours (Lopes et al., 2004). The ability to manage emotions may facilitate executive functions associated with coordination of numerous skills required for social behaviour (Lopes et al., 2004). It may also have an influence on the quality of social interactions, because according to Lopes et al. (2004), understanding emotional dynamics may help a person to anticipate his/her own and the other person's emotional reactions and thereby manage emotions effectively during an intense encounter.

5.2.2 Psychological capital and work readiness

Personal work characteristics: only negative correlations were found between the subscales of PsyCap and PWC. H29 stating that there is positive relationship between efficacy and personal work characteristics ($r = -.29$; $p = .00$); H33 stating that there is a positive relationship between hope and personal work characteristics ($r = -.31$, $p = .00$) and H37 stating that there is a positive relationship between resilience and personal work characteristics ($r = -.38$; $p = .00$) and H41 stating that there is a positive significant relationship between optimism and personal work characteristics ($r = -.41$; $p = .00$) were rejected. The summary statistics (see Table 4.3) indicated low significant negative relationships. This means that the more confidence a person has in his/her ability to succeed at challenging tasks and persevering towards his/her goals and if necessary, bouncing back from adversity in order to attain success, the less he/she displays behaviours indicative of personal work characteristics such as adaptability. These negative results are unexpected and warrant further investigation. A possible reason for the negative correlations could be due to the sample in this study. The majority of the participants are unemployed and thus have no work experience. The negative correlations could also be attributed to the negative wording used in the subscale PWC, which may affect the participants understanding what PWC entails.

Organisational acumen: H30 stating that there is a significant positive relationship between efficacy and organisational acumen ($r = .37$; $p = .00$), H34 stating that there is a significant positive relationship between hope and organisational acumen ($r = .43$; $p = .00$), H38 stating that there is a significant positive relationship between resilience and organisational acumen ($r = .27$; $p = .00$) and H42 stating that there is a positive relationship between optimism and organisational acumen ($r = .52$; $p = .00$), were accepted. Results (see Table 4.3) indicated moderate to low significant positive correlations between subscales of PsyCap and organisational acumen.

These findings are in line with research by Avey et al. (2010) on the additive value of positive PsyCap in work attitudes and behaviours. The benefit of this finding for graduates lies in the role that PsyCap can play in assisting graduates when joining a new organisation. One of the behaviours indicative of organisational acumen is maturity. It can be expected that those graduates with a strong PsyCap will deal with adversity more effectively than those with low PsyCap, more so this will be indicative of desired organisational behaviour of maturity. According to Toor and Ofori (2010), PsyCap has been linked to desirable outcomes such as organisational commitment, organisational citizenship and perceived organisational effectiveness.

Work competence: H31 stating that there is a relationship between efficacy and work competence ($r = .48$; $p = .00$), H34 stating that there is a positive relationship between hope and work competence ($r = .45$; $p = .00$), H39 stating that there is a positive relationship between resilience and work competence ($r = .27$; $p = .00$) and H43 stating that there is a positive relationship between optimism and work competence ($r = .40$; $p = .00$), were accepted. This is in line with literature regarding the relationship between PsyCap and behaviours indicative of work competence. The benefits of these results lie in the role that PsyCap can play in assisting graduates to deal with challenges in the work environment. According to Peterson et al. (2011) employees who demonstrated an increase in PsyCap also showed an increase in their performance.

Social intelligence: H32 stating that there is a positive relationship between efficacy and social intelligence ($r = .39$; $p = .00$), H36 stating that there is a positive relationship between hope and social intelligence ($r = .31$; $p = .00$) and H44 stating that there is a positive relationship between optimism and social intelligence ($r = .25$; $p = .00$) were accepted. This means that the confidence to take on challenges and persevere towards goal attainment, as well as making positive contributions towards succeeding increases, behaviours indicative of social intelligence such as interpersonal adaptability, also increase. A negative correlation was found between subscales of EI and subscales of WR. H40 stating that there is a positive relationship between resilience and social intelligence was rejected. The results indicated negligible significant positive correlations ($r = .17$; $p = .02$). This means that as the ability to sustain or even bounce back from adversity increases, the behaviours indicative of social intelligence, such as interpersonal adaptability also increase.

The findings in this study have benefits for graduates and subsequently the extent to which they are considered ready for the work environment. The benefit of developing the psychological capital competencies in graduates lies in the role that PsyCap plays in dealing with difficult events both at work and in one's personal life. According to Luthans et al. (2007) a strong PsyCap can benefit graduates by developing their ability to positively appraise circumstances and increase their probability for success. There are many challenges associated with the transition period from school to work that may have an influence on the WR of graduates. Life transitions are periods in time where an individual experiences major changes. The period from university to work can also be regarded as a transitional period, where an individual leaves school and starts employment (Ng & Feldman, 2007). This period is associated with a great deal of instability, waiting and uncertainty (Lenz, 2001). The experience of going through this period is often characterised by disorientation, foreignness, and a kind of sensory overload (Polach, 2004). Successfully managing the transition can be difficult and the outcomes of adapting to the work roles have far reaching implications (Graham & McKenzie, 1995). How smoothly that transition occurs helps set the pattern for an individual's willingness to change jobs, organisations, and occupations later in life and also how individuals cope with those subsequent career changes (Ng & Feldman, 2007). Ensuring a smooth transition period requires personal resources such as a strong PsyCap.

Furthermore a strong PsyCap can be beneficial in assisting graduates to deal with hostile work environments. Interpersonal relationships in the workplace have an influence on performance of individuals. Environments characterised by high levels of interpersonal conflicts can be problematic (Chamberlain & Hudson, 2010). Add to that high job demands and the lack of appropriate resources to deal with such demands, and the possibility of developing negative outcomes such as burnout, becomes more likely (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). Burnout has a negative impact on performance and the development of PsyCap can buffer the effects of such experiences. Individuals who possess high self efficacy are more likely to persevere in the face of obstacles and difficulties (Rego et al., 2011).

5.2.3 Sense of coherence and work readiness

Personal work characteristics: All the formulated hypothesised relationships between subscale of WR (pwc) and SOC were rejected. H45 stating that there is a positive significant relationship between meaning and personal work characteristics ($r = -.42$; $p = .00$), H49 stating that there is a positive relationship between comprehensibility and personal work characteristics ($r = -.42$; $p = .00$) and H53 stating that there is a positive relationship between manageability and personal work characteristics ($r = -.40$; $p = .00$), were rejected.

The summary statistic (see Table 4.3) indicated moderate significant negative correlations. This means that the more confident a person is that the external/internal stimuli he/she is experiencing are structured and predictable, and the more he/she perceives resources to be available to offset the demands posed by these stimuli, as well as viewing these demands as challenges worthy of investment and engagement, the less the person displays behaviours indicative of personal work characteristics such as being more resilient and adaptable. These negative correlations could be attributed to the sample. SOC develops from making sense of countless stressors one is confronted with and through this repeated experience of such sense making; a person develops, over-time, a strong SOC (Antonovsky as cited in Strumpfer, 1990). The sample used in this study was undergraduate students with no work experience or experience of workplace stressors. Therefore it is possible that their lack of exposure to the “work environment” experiences contributed to these negative correlations.

Organisational acumen: H46 stating that there is a positive relationship between meaning and organisational acumen ($r = .37$; $p = .00$), was accepted. This means that believing that the challenges one is experiencing are worthy of an investment, has a positive influence on behaviours indicative of organisational acumen, such as organisational awareness. This may benefit graduates when dealing with high job demands. A positive approach may lessen the extent to which they experienced job demands and affect the performance of graduates. H50 stating that there is a positive relationship between comprehensibility and organisational acumen ($r = .11$; $p = .00$) and H55 stating that there is a positive relationship between manageability and organisational acumen ($r = .11$; $p = .15$), were rejected. The summary statistic (see Table 4.3) indicated low significant and insignificant correlations, respectively. This therefore means that when a person perceives stimuli in his or her environment as structured and predictable and that resources to deal with these challenges are available, the display of behaviours indicative of organisational acumen also increases, however the association is weak. This finding is unexpected; however a possible reason for these negative results could be the lack of context for the participants. The sample consisted of graduates with no work experience and possibly no understanding of behaviours indicative of organisational acumen.

Work competence: H47 stating that there is a positive relationship between meaning and work competence ($r = .29$; $p = .00$), and H51 stating that there is a positive relationship between comprehensibility and work competence ($r = .23$; $p = .00$), were accepted. This means that as the extent to which one perceives stimuli in their internal and external environment as structured and worthy of investment and engagement increases, an increase will also be observed in behaviours indicative of work competence.

It can be expected that such individuals will display more problem solving and technical focus skills and that they will be more motivated. The finding is an advantage for graduates when they experience the stress because of high job demands. A high SOC is associated with the ability to give sense and structure to stressors (Antonovsky, 1987). H55 stating that there is a positive relationship between manageability and work competence ($r = .19$; $p = .00$), was rejected. The more a person perceives that there are resources in their environment to offset the demands posed by the experience of internal and external stimuli, they also display behaviours indicative of work competence, however the association is weak. This is in contrast with literature of job demands and resources. Job resources are considered to be the most important predictors of workplace engagement (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007). The JD-R model assumes that job resources have a motivational potential and lead to outcomes such as high work engagement and job performance (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). Furthermore job resources are considered to be instrumental in achieving work goals (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011).

Social intelligence: H48 stating that there is a significant positive relationship between meaning and social intelligence ($r = .28$; $p = .00$) was accepted. The more an individual perceives challenges and demands in his/her environment as worthy of engagement and investment, the more he/she displays behaviours indicative of social intelligence, such as interpersonal adaptability and social orientation. For graduates the benefit of this finding lies in dealing with high job demands when working in groups or teams, when being able to relate to others could have implications for the quality of performance output. H52 stating that there is a positive relationship between comprehensibility and social intelligence ($r = .13$; $p = .00$) and H56 stating that there is a significant positive relationship between manageability and social intelligence ($r = .13$; $p = .00$), were rejected. An increase in the perception of stimuli as structured and ordered and the presence of resources to offset such demands has a positive influence on social intelligence, although the association is weak. The negative finding on the relationship between comprehensibility, manageability and social intelligence is not well understood and warrants further research exploration.

Although the overall results indicate poor relationships between the subscales of EI and SOC, developing those aspects where positive relationship were found could still have benefits for the extent to which they are considered work ready. Developing graduates SOC may assist graduates to perceive situations and social environments and their accompanying demands as less stressful, threatening or anxiety provoking (Feldt, 2007). A strong SOC can assist graduates to correctly perceive situations in their new environment and respond to them accordingly.

Given the unique challenges which are associated with being in a particular life and career stage (see par 2.5), a strong SOC may be beneficial to recent graduates who have to face these challenges. Comprehensibility and meaning were found to correlate better with all the subscales of WR, with the exception of personal work characteristics.

This means that the ability to make sense of experiences and to perceive them in a clear, ordered and structured manner will influence the extent to which graduates' are considered work ready. Overall, individuals scoring high on SOC have been found to experience less emotional exhaustion (Feldt, 2007), experience fewer stress symptoms, less burnout and cope more efficiently with strain in the work environment (Albertsen et al., 2003). A strong SOC has also been associated with more self efficacy, less learned helplessness, more hardiness and more internal locus of control (Smith & Meyers, as cited in Jellesma et al., 2011).

5.3 DISCUSSION OF MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS RESULTS

Multiple regression analysis was performed to assess the contributions of the individual variables in explaining variance in the dependent variable. Results of the multiple regression analyses indicated which of the independent variables made unique contributions to the subscales of the dependent variables (PWC, AO, W, & SI).

The summary statistics in the regression model of PWC (see Table 4.5) revealed that 35% of the variability of PWC could be accounted for by the independent variables. The beta values (see Table 4.6) indicated that emotional self awareness makes the greatest contribution in predicting PWC, however this prediction is insignificant. Comprehensibility (SOC) makes the fourth largest and significant unique contribution in predicting PWC.

Comprehensibility (see par 2.5.3) refers to the extent to which an individual perceives internal/external stimuli in a clear, ordered and structured way (Antonovsky, 1987; 1993). This result holds potential advantages for the graduate WR readiness in terms of dealing with the challenges associated with the transition from school to work, as well as the factors in the work environment and personal issues associated with life/career stages. Results of a multiple regression analysis by Harry and Coetzee (2011) indicated that SOC is a significant predictor of affective wellbeing.

Being able to perceive stimuli in a clear, ordered and structured manner will assist graduates to cope with the challenges associated with the move from home to school.

The transition period from university to the work environment (see par 2.2.1) is considered a period where an individual is expected to make major changes, develop new skills and learn to cope with new experiences in order to accommodate the changes. As a result, transitioning from school to work is associated with negative effects on the psychological wellbeing and health of individuals. Being able to make sense of the challenges associated with this period will assist graduates to better manage the transitional process; more specifically it will reduce the negative impact of this transitional period on the performance of graduates.

Comprehensibility will also assist graduates in dealing with the shock of being exposed to a new culture, as well as the experiences of unmet expectations (see par 2.2.1.1 and 2.2.1.3, respectively). According to Graham and McKenzie (1995), one of the biggest elements of change in the transitional period is the dramatic change in culture. The reality shock combined with experiences of unrealistic expectations can impact on the time it takes for graduates to fully apply themselves in their work setting. However, being able to view the experiences in a clear, ordered and structured way versus the chaotic reaction, may have an impact on the time it takes to adjust.

The summary statistics of the regression model of OA (see Table 4.6) revealed that 25% of the variability of OA could be accounted for by the independent variables. The beta values (see Table 4.12) indicated that emotional reasoning made the largest significantly unique contribution in predicting organisational acumen, followed by emotional expression and optimism. Emotional reasoning and emotional expressions are subscales of EI (see par 2.5.1) emotional reasoning is indicative of consideration of own and other's emotions when making decisions at work, while emotional expression indicates effective emotional expressions at work, such as feelings of happiness, frustration, as well as feedback to colleagues (Ginac, 2008). Optimism is a subscale of PsyCap (see par 2.5.2). Optimism can be described as a strong expectation that things will turn out right in life, despite setbacks and frustrations. This result holds potential advantages for graduates' WR in terms of dealing with the interpersonal relationships (see discussion on par 2.2.1), as well as the job demands in a new work environment (see par 2.2.2).

As a potential advantage, emotional reasoning and emotional expression can assist graduates in dealing with interpersonal relationships in the work environment. According to Labianca and Brass (2006), employees in the work environment are embedded in social networks that can provide opportunities and benefits, such as job satisfaction and enhanced performance, however, the very opposite is true.

The expression of appropriate and effective emotions is crucial in dealing with difficult issues. Successful resolving of such issues lies in being able to take into consideration other peoples' emotions when making certain decisions, while at the same time being able to express the appropriate emotion, at the appropriate time in order to be effective.

The potential advantage of optimism for graduates includes being able to make positive attributions about succeeding whenever facing challenging tasks. According to Goleman (1995) optimism is an attitude that buffers people against falling into apathy, hopelessness or depression in the face of tough going. So when job demands outweigh the job resources, those graduates high on optimism will be able to make positive attributions and, this means their performance will be less affected by the experiences.

The summary statistics of the regression model of WC (Table 4.11) revealed that 27% of the variability in work competence could be accounted for by the independent variables. The beta values (see Table 4.12) indicated that efficacy made the largest unique and significant contribution in predicting work competence, followed by emotional self management. The summary statistics of the regression model of SI (Table 4.14) revealed that 22% of variability in social intelligence could be accounted for by the independent variables. The beta values (see table 4.15) also indicated that efficacy made the largest significantly unique contribution in predicting social intelligence. Lam and Kirby (2002) found that emotional regulation explained individual cognitive-based performance over and beyond the level attributable to general intelligence.

Efficacy (see par 2.5.2.1) is the belief that one has mastery over events of one's life and can meet challenges as they occur. Emotional self management (see par 2.5.1) indicates engagement in activities that facilitate positive development of emotions in oneself, as well as relative absence of dwelling on negative emotions. These results hold potential advantages for graduates' WR readiness in terms of dealing with challenges in the work environment as well as those experienced as a result of being in a life/career stage (see par 2.2.3).

Emotional self management can assist graduates to move on emotively. Development of positive emotions is important for psychological wellbeing. As a potential advantage for graduates, a strong efficacy can assist in dealing with challenges associated with life/career development. Our lives and careers are interconnected, what happens in one affects the other. Navigating the different stages of life and career development requires mastery of challenges associated with each stage.

Consequently inability to find a balance between these tasks can cause confusion and stress (Levinson, 1986). Graduates with a strong efficacy will be more able to deal with the challenges when compared with those low in efficacy (Rego et al., 2011; Demerouti et al., 2011).

5.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The results of the research were discussed in this chapter. The chapters commenced with a discussion of the correlation results, looking at the subscales of EI, SOC and PsyCap in relation to the subscales of WR. This discussion was followed by the discussion of the regression analysis results.

Significant and mentionable results of this study include the contributions different independent variables (EI, SOC & PsyCap) have on predicting the dependent variable (WR). Comprehensibility (SOC), efficacy and optimism (PsyCap), emotional reasoning, emotional self management and emotional expression were found to be predictors of the subscales of WR (PWC, OA, WC & SI). These findings will make significant contributions to the work readiness levels of graduates.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this research was to explore the relationships between the personal resources of EI, SOC, PsyCap and WR. Exploration of these relationships could make significant contributions improving the work readiness of graduates. The main objective of this study was to investigate the theoretical and empirical relationships between EI, SOC, PsyCap and WR. Scientific research methodology was used to determine the validity of relationships between independent variables (EI, SOC and PsyCap) and the dependent variable (WR). (see Figure 1.1). The theoretical objective was to provide justification for the exploration of these relationships and the empirical objective was to reflect the relationships between variables statistically.

The significant contribution of this study is rooted in the different outputs produced by this research. The study enriched literature by creating awareness with respect to the personal resources that may contribute to the WR of graduates. The study created a new body of knowledge and an awareness of the need to invest in personal resources as part of the generic skills in improving the work readiness of graduates. The research gap identified by the research in literature on whether there is a relationship between EI, SOC, PsyCap and WR created a specific focus on the factors that contribute to WR of graduates.

The research revealed that there are significant positive relationships between the subscales of EI, SOC, PsyCap and WR. Significant positive relationships were found between EI (ESM, EE, EAO, ER, ESM, ESMO, and ESC) and WR (OA); (EE, EAO, ER, ESM, ESMO and ESC) and WR (WC); EI (EE, ER, ESM AND ESMO) and WR (SI). Significant positive relationships were found between PsyCap (efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience) and WR (OA); PsyCap (efficacy, hope, resilience and optimism) and WR (WC); PsyCap (efficacy, hope and optimism) and WR (SI). Significant positive relationships were found between SOC (meaning) and WR (OA), SOC (meaning and comprehensibility) and WR (WC); and SOC (meaning) and WR(SI). WR (PWC) correlated negatively with all the subscales of the independent variables.

The results seem to suggest that overall emotional intelligence and psychological capital have significant positive relationship with work readiness, more specifically, with organisational acumen and work competence. Sense of coherence (meaning) also has significant positive relationship with WR, more specifically with organisational acumen, work competence and social intelligence. The correlation results indicate that EI and PsyCap play a role in organisational acumen and work competence of graduates. The researcher can conclude that there is a relationship between EI, PsyCap and WR organisational acumen and work competence. Only meaning from SOC has a relationship with organisational acumen, work competence and social intelligence. However, given that overall SOC shows weak relationships with the different subscale of WR, the researcher cannot say with confidence that there is a relationship overall between SOC and WR.

The results of multiple regression analysis of PWC (see Figure 4.57 and Table 4.5) revealed that only comprehensibility could be used to explain WR subscale PWC. The results are in contrast with the correlation results (see Table 4.4), where comprehensibility was found to have no significant relationship with personal work characteristics.

The results of multiple regression analysis of OA (see Figure 4.59 and Table 4.8) revealed that emotional reasoning, emotional expression and optimism could be used to explain WR subscale of OA. These results together with the correlations results (see Tables 4.2 & 4.3) prove relationships between EI(ER, EE); PsyCap (optimism) and WR (OA).

The results of multiple regression analysis of WC (see Figure 4.61 and Table 4.11) revealed that efficacy and emotional self management could be used to explain WR subscale WC. These results together with the correlation results (see Table 4.2 and Table 4.3) prove relationships between EI (ESM); PsyCap (efficacy) and WR (WC).

The results of multiple regression analysis of SI (see Figure 4.64 and Table 4.14) revealed that efficacy could be used to explain WR subscale SI. These results together with the correlation results (see table 4.3) prove relationships between PsyCap (efficacy) and WR (SI).

Together these results prove that EI and PsyCap can be considered as factors that may have an influence on the work readiness of graduates. From these results the researcher proposes that the predictors of the various models be used as a starting point in creating awareness on the type of personal resources required to improve on the work readiness of graduates. The different models should be further tested to facilitate possible generalisation and application of the single model to the greater graduate community.

6.2 LIMITATIONS

Exploratory research is a limitation in itself, as it does not provide causal factors and due this limitation one cannot safely conclude that the independent variables identified in this study influence the outlined dependent variables. There is a possibility of extraneous factors that may exist that were not controlled for impacting on the results. This therefore warrants caution when presenting and interpreting the results.

Another limitation of this study is the sample. The participants of this study were not “graduates” in the true sense of the word, referring to a person who has completed their studies. The majority of the participants were final year students who could be regarded as “future graduates”. This limits the generalisation of the findings to the graduate community.

The relatively small sample size (N=183) further limits the generalisation of the results to the greater graduate environment. Furthermore, the size of this sample also limits the kind of statistical analysis that could have been undertaken and has a negative impact on the correlations. The poor psychometric properties of the subscales (Genos, PsyCap & SOC) could also be viewed as a limitation.

Data for the study was collected by means of self report measurement instruments. According to Podsakoff et al. (2003) there are several potential biases in using surveys for measuring any psychological variables that must be taken into consideration. These biases include consistency, social desirability, leniency, acquiescence, transient mood states and item ambiguity. The convenience sampling method also limits the generalisation of the results.

Another limitation of this study was the use of a recently developed questionnaire (WRS). Although there is evidence of its empirical soundness, its validity has not yet been confirmed with samples outside of the European countries.

Utilising this questionnaire in this research was considered an opportunity to provide empirical evidence of its validity within an African sample. Although high correlations were observed, there is no way to control for social desirability. The scale does not provide for means to mitigate the impact of social desirability, therefore the results must be interpreted with caution. The subscales of the WR scale, more particularly, the subscale of personal work characteristics, contains items which are all negatively worded. This may have an impact on the correlations with the dependent variables as can be observed in the results section.

Notwithstanding the above mentioned limitations, this research still provides new information to the literature on the relationship EI, SOC, PsyCap and WR. Furthermore this research provides unique information on the use of measuring instruments in a sample of participants from South Africa and Uganda. The researcher views this study as making a vital contribution to understanding how we can incorporate personal resources in improving the work readiness of graduates.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for future research and how the results of this study could be used as well as recommended interventions strategies are discussed. Research on work readiness involving the investigation of other personal resources that might contribute to WR of graduates could lead to a greater understanding on the personal resources needed to improve the WR of graduates. The researcher suggests an expansion of the scope of this study to include other significant and related variables of personal resources such as hardiness. The examination of other variables such as years of study, types of qualification and different institutions including foreign institutions, is recommended.

Although significant relationships were found between EI, PsyCap and WR, the researcher suggest that this topic should be explored further to gain an understanding of why these variables did not make strong contributions to WR, more so further exploration is warranted to find out why SOC did not have a meaningful relationship with WR. These efforts might make a meaningful contribution in building a case for the inclusion of personal resources as part of graduate attributes. Future research on the personal resources needed to be considered work ready might focus on a sample of actual graduates. This might provide information whether the graduates' current levels EI, SOC and PsyCap are having any impact on the extent to which they are perceived by their supervisors and colleagues to be work ready.

It is proposed that the various models developed in this study could be combined and tested against the data to possibly develop as a starting point a personal resources work readiness model for graduates.

It is also recommended that an analysis of internal consistency be undertaken to assess and possibly improve on the WR scale. An improvement on the scale might result in an improvement on the correlations with the independent variables of EI, SOC and PsyCap. Using a different instrument to assess work readiness could also possibly produce different results between personal resources and WR.

The incorporation of EI, SOC and PsyCap in the curriculum of students is recommended. This can be done by adopting models used to develop graduate attributes, which is to incorporate graduates attributes in the curriculum, rather than teach them as a separate module within a course. It is recommended that further research be done to determine how these personal resources can be incorporated into the curriculum. Because the personal resources of EI, SOC and PsyCap are proposed as generic skills, meaning they are the type of skills required by all students irrespective of their faculties and departments, a single design to incorporate personal resources into the curriculum may be applicable across different faculties and departments. Short term interventions such as workshops have proven through research not to deliver the kind of impact needed to make long term changes. Therefore to improve and see the impact of these personal resources on the performance of graduates, it is essential to embed them into institutions' curriculums.

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