Emotional Intelligence, Core Competency and Employability skills of the Management Students: A Relationship Study

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the changing nature of careers that require people to take ownership of their careers and to develop and sustain their employability. Career counselors and human resource practitioners have been concerned for a long time about employees' psychological career resources or career meta-competencies that enable them to take ownership of their careers and be proactive in managing their careers and improving their employability.

As a result, current research has focused on career meta-competencies, like self-esteem and emotional literacy, as important psychological career resources. Self-esteem can predict employability significantly. However, there seems to be a lack of research in India on how people's self-esteem relates to their employability attributes, especially in India's multi-cultural context.

Another trend is the increasing diversity in workplaces. It requires employers to understand how people's biographical characteristics (age, race, gender, marital status and employment status) influence their employability attributes.

Given the current skills shortages and concerns about attracting and retaining young talent in business organizations, the secondary aim of this study was to investigate whether people's age, race, gender, marital status and employment status significantly predict their self-esteem and employability attributes.

Keywords: Employability, Core Competency, Entrepreneurial Orientation.

1. Introduction

In today's challenging world of work, technical skills and academic knowledge are no longer enough for a person to find work (Fallows & Steven, 2000; Savickas et al., 2009).

The 21st century requires young adults, who are entering the world of work, to be employable and to sustain their employability. Research has shown that career meta-competencies are important for sustained employability (Coetzee, 2008; Fugate, Kiniciki & Ashforth, 2004).

Background to the study

Young adults entering the world of work for the first time deal with many challenges. Amongst them are unemployment, decreased employment opportunities, diminished job security and quickly changing technology. They also have an increasing personal responsibility to keep up with these changes, to improve their skills and to sustain their employability. The increased concerns about the employability of young adults, especially in India, has led to more emphasis on employability and helping people to increase their employability.

In the traditional career context, the organization took responsibility for a person's career. However, in the new world of work, the responsibility shifted to individuals. They now had to market themselves and increase their employability skills (De Vos & Soens, 2008; Forrier & Sels, 2003; Hall, 2004; Raabe, Frese & Beehr, 2007). McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) also believe that the responsibility for employability has now shifted from the organization to the employee. This means that the main responsibility now lies with employees for their growth and continued professional development.

The new relationship between the worker and the world of work has made it necessary to develop career counselling and development interventions. These will help people to

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take ownership of their careers and be proactive in managing them whilst reflecting on their career meta-competencies as key resources for sustaining their employability (Baruch, 2004; Coetzee, 2008; Fugate et al., 2004; Savickas et al., 2009). Fugate et al. (2004) argue that it is the responsibility of employees to find information about careers. They also need to develop their skills and capabilities as well as other abilities, which current and potential employers require, in order to sustain their employability.

Employability refers to the ability of people to enter the workplace, adjust to it and be dynamic there. It also refers to their ability to perform consistently, find or create work through the best possible use of occupation-related and career meta-competencies (Coetzee & Roythorne-Jacobs, 2007; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Herr, Cramer & Niles, 2004; Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006). Therefore, people need a set of skills and abilities to make them more employable in the new world of work (ACCI, 2002).

Career meta-competencies refer to a set of psychological resources that are critical for career development (Coetzee, 2008). These psychological resources include attributes and abilities like behavioural adaptability, self-knowledge, career orientation awareness, sense of purpose, self-esteem and emotional literacy. They allow people to be self-sufficient learners and agents in managing their own careers (Coetzee, 2008; Briscoe & Hall, 1999; Coetzee & Roythorne-Jacobs, 2007; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Herr et al., 2004).

People who have a wide range of psychological career resources are generally more able to adapt to changing career circumstances and tend to have higher levels of employability attributes (Fugate et al., 2004; Griffen & Hesketh, 2005). Therefore, self-esteem is a career meta-competency that influences people's employability (Baruch, 2004; Coetzee, 2008; Fugate et al., 2004; Sinclair, 2009).

2. Literature Review

Employability attributes

The concept of employability has recently been emphasized as a key contributor to career satisfaction and success in an increasingly unstable and chaotic global business environment.

According to Marock (2008), there is no agreement about how one should define employability. Hillage and Pollard (1998) suggest that employability is the ability to find and keep rewarding work and to move self-sufficiently in the labour market to realise ones potential through sustainable employment.

In the context of the present study, an employability attribute is a psychosocial construct that describes career-related characteristics. It promotes adaptive cognition, behaviour and affect. It also improves a person's suitability for appropriate and sustainable employment (Bezuidenhout, 2010; Coetzee, 2011; Fugate et al., 2004; Yorke & Knight, 2007).

Therefore, employability is an attribute that includes self-directedness or personal agency for retaining or securing a job or form of employment. It uses a range of personal career-related attributes that are generally regarded as alternatives to job security in an unstable world of work (Rothwell, Jewell & Hardie, 2009; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011). Various authors have found that self-perceived employability, increases feelings of being in control of one's career and confident to secure a suitable position in the labour market (De Cuyper, Bernhard-Oettel, Berntson, De Witte & Alarco, 2008). Furthermore, employability is value- and identity-driven – it relates to a person's own attributes and biography (Tomlinson, 2007). McArdle, Waters, Briscoe and Hall (2007) suggest that career identity and adaptability are vital aspects of a person's self-perceived employability. According to Bandura (1997), Van der Velde and Van den Berg (2003), self-perceived employability depends on a person's self-efficacy. Kanfer, Warnberg and Kantrowitz (2001) found that self-efficacy has a positive relationship with employment outcomes. Employability is also beneficial for present performance on the job and for career and business outcomes (Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006).

Bezuidenhout (2010) and Coetzee (2010) developed an employability attributes framework specifically for students in the Indian higher education context. It consists of eight core career-related employability attributes that are important for increasing a person's chances of securing and sustaining employment (Bezuidenhout, 2010; Coetzee, 2011).

Career self-management: This refers to a person's ability to sustain employment through career planning, continuous learning and career management (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011).

The set of attributes that is associated with career self-management:

- The ability to reflect on one's career aspirations and have a clear sense of what one wants to achieve in one's career

- The ability to recognize the skills one needs to be successful in one's career and the actions one needs to take to achieve one's goals

- The confidence and determination to pursue and

achieve one's career goals

- Continuous engagement in development activities in order to achieve one's goals.

Cultural competence: This refers to a person's meta-cognitive ability to understand, act and interact effectively in diverse cultural environments.

The set of attributes that follows is associated with cultural competence:

- Knowing the customs of other cultures and understanding their beliefs and values

- Having the confidence to communicate with people from other cultures and finding it easy and enjoyable to do so

- Being able to initiate and maintain relationships with people from diverse cultures.

●Self-efficacy: This refers to people's perceptions of the level of difficulty of career-related or performance-related tasks that they believe they are going to attempt and their perceptions of how well they will be able to carry out the required actions. In addition, it refers to the extent to which their perceptions will persist despite obstacles (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011). Self-efficacy also refers to the estimate that people make of their ability to cope, perform and thrive (Bezuidenhout, 2010). The set of attributes that follows is associated with self-efficacy:

- Being able to function independently of others

- Being able to make decisions

- Having the confidence to achieve one's goals

- Being persistent with challenges

- Enjoying the discovery of creative new solutions keeping oneself up to date with the newest developments in one's job and career.

Career resilience: This refers to a person's ability to adapt to changing situations by accepting changes in one's job and organization, looking forward to working with different and new people, the willingness to take risks as well as having self-confidence (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011).

Bezuidenhout (2010) described career resilience as a personal disposition that facilitates a high level of adaptability, self-confidence, competence and confidence, irrespective of difficult situations.

The set of attributes that follows is associated with career resilience:

- Having a high regard for one's personal qualities

- Being open to feedback from others about one's strengths and weaknesses

- Being confident about one's accomplishments

- Being open to, and being able to adapt to, changes in one's environment.

Entrepreneurial orientation: This refers to a person's preference for innovation and creativity, a tendency to take risks, a need for achievement, a tolerance for uncertainty as well as a preference for autonomy when exploiting opportunities in the working environment and when creating something valuable (Bezuidenhout, 2010).

The set of attributes that follows is associated with entrepreneurial orientation:

- Being interested in, and continuously undertaking, new business opportunities being open to new ideas

- Having a positive attitude to the implications of change in one's workplace or studies

- Being comfortable in unfamiliar situations

- Being able to accept responsibility for the success of failure of one's career.

Proactivity: This refers to a person's willingness to engage in active roles that lead to future orientated and self-initiated action in order to change oneself and one's situation (Bezuidenhout, 2010).

The set of attributes that follows is associated with proactivity:

- Being able to take accountability for one's decisions

- Being able to set challenging targets for oneself

- Being able to identify opportunities before others do

- Being able to improve one's knowledge and skills in order ensure career progress

- Being able to adapt to changing situations

- Being able to persist despite difficult career circumstances.

Emotional literacy: This refers to people's ability to use emotions adaptively and their ability to read, understand and control their own and other people's emotions (Bezuidenhout, 2010; Coetzee, 2010).

Self-esteem

Self-esteem (as a career meta-competency) is the central element of any person's daily experiences and is, therefore, an essential psychological construct. It refers to the way people feel about themselves. It reflects and affects their dealings with the environment and the people

with whom they come into contact (Kernis, 2003).

Rosenberg (1965) described self-esteem as the positive or negative attitudes that people have about themselves. High self-esteem means that people feel that they are good enough whereas a low self-esteem means that they feel that they are not. Baumeister (1997) describes self-esteem as the evaluative dimension of the self-concept. Battle (2002) describes self-esteem as the perception that people have of their self-worth. It develops gradually and becomes more differentiated with adulthood and because of interaction with others. Gray- Little and Hafdahl (2000) refer to self-esteem is a predictor of human behaviour and an indication of how people could react to certain events. They also regard self-esteem as an indication of psychological wellbeing.

The self-esteem model of Battle (1992) is relevant to this study because its underlying principles allow researchers to study the self-esteem construct in a socially embedded context (like the workplace). Furthermore, self-esteem is a multi-dimensional construct and Battle (1982; 1992) supports the multi-dimensional theoretical approach to defining the construct of self-esteem. He proposes that self-esteem consists of general self-esteem, social or peer self-esteem and personal self-esteem.

General self-esteem refers to people's overall perceptions of, and feelings about, their worth. Social self-esteem is the aspect of self-esteem that relates to people's perceptions of, and feelings about, the quality of their relationships with their peers. Personal self-esteem relates to people's most innate perceptions and feelings of self-worth. General self-esteem, social self-esteem and personal self-esteem combined make up people's overall self-esteem. In addition, each of these components of self-esteem consists of various factors. Battle (1982) focused on the cognitive factors (self-evaluations and sense of self-efficacy), the affective factors (subjective feelings and mood) and the interpersonal needs (social acceptance from others).

According to Maslow (1970), people need a positive self-esteem (feeling good about themselves), need esteem from others and need to belong (so that others also feel positive about them and that the group accepts them). To develop a positive self-esteem, people strive for achievement and mastery of their socio-cultural environment (Coetzee, 2005). In order for the group to accept them and to gain respect from others, they behave in ways that will lead to recognition, appreciation and prestige. People tend to feel confident, competent, strong, useful and needed when they have satisfied their needs for self-esteem. On the other hand, when people have not satisfied their need for self-esteem, they tend to feel inferior, anxious, worried, depressed, weak and helpless

(Coetzee, 2005).

Therefore, identifying, measuring, improving and sustaining high self-esteem have become important issues for educators, teachers, trainers and career counsellors. Helping people to improve and sustain a healthy and positive self-esteem is a practical application of the knowledge currently available about it (Coetzee, 2005).

Brockner and Guare (1983) and Kerka (1998) found that people with low self-esteem are more likely to perform poorly and achieve less compared to people with high self-esteem. In addition, Baumeister (1997) found that people with low self-esteem do not seem to have a clear sense of who and what they are and are not confident that they will succeed in what they try. Therefore, it seems that people with low self-esteem are less likely to have well developed employability skills compared to people with high self-esteem.

Various authors found that one could improve low self-esteem through training (Brockner & Gaure, 1983; Fugate et al., 2004; Smoll, Smit, Barnett & Everett, 1993). Therefore, one can conclude that training will help graduates and people who are looking for work to develop self-esteem. Using these research findings, the researcher formulated the hypothesis that follows for objective 1:

Hypothesis 1: Self-esteem has a significant positive relationship with employability attributes.

The aims of this article also cover differences in biographical details. Therefore, the researcher conducted a literature review of significant differences.

Orth, Robins and Trzesniewski (2010) found that middle-aged people have a slightly higher self-esteem than older adults do. However, other studies have failed to show any significant age differences (Brandstadter & Greve, 1994; Demo, 1992).

Van Rooy, Alonso and Viswesvaran (2005) found a positive relationship between age and employability. Many older employees find themselves in the same position as new job applicants because of rapid changes in the market environment. This results in retrenchments and job changes (Van Rooy et al., 2005). De Armond et al. (2006) and Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden (2006) found that employability decreases with age, especially when a person moves into a new field or to a higher position. Various authors have reported that women are less employable than men are. In other words, women tend to have lower employability compared to men (Clarke, 2008; Lee, 2001; Scandura & Lankau, 1997). They explained that many organizations discriminate against women because of gender stereotypes and family responsibilities.

Using these research findings, the researcher formulated the hypotheses that follow:

Hypothesis 2: Age, gender, race, marital status, job level, current employment status and employability satisfaction significantly predict self-esteem and employability attributes.

Hypothesis 3: Men and women differ significantly in self-esteem and employability attributes.

3. Research objectives

The present study aims to determine the relationship between people's self-esteem and employability attributes; to determine whether people's age, gender, race, marital status, job level and employment status significantly predict their self-esteem and employability attributes; and to determine whether men and women differ significantly in their self-esteem and employability attributes.

Potential value-addition of the study

Assessing whether people's self-esteem has a relationship with their employability attributes may provide valuable information for human resource managers and career counsellors concerned with career counselling and career development practices to improve employability attributes and skills.

In addition, the study could add new knowledge and insight that might help to improve career development support practices. It could also assist career-counselling practitioners to help young adults, who are entering the world of work, to improve their employability attributes.

4. Research design

Research approach

The researcher used a quantitative survey design (Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 2003) to achieve the objectives of this study.

The participants comprised a convenience sample of 304 students who were pursuing business management course in various management education institutes in Kerala.

Measuring instruments

The researcher used the Culture Free Self-Esteem Inventory (CFSEI2-AD) (Battle, 1992) and the Employability Attributes Scale (EAS) (Bezuidenhout, 2010; Coetzee, 2010) to measure the variables that were relevant to this study.

Culture Free Self-esteem Inventory: The CFSEI 2-AD (Battle, 1992) is a self-reporting inventory developed over a course of several years' work with students and adult clients. The CFSEI2-AD, which measures a person's perceptions of self-worth and achievement compared to those of others, has been valuable because it offers greater insights into clients' subjective feelings and their psychological states of wellbeing.

It consists of four sub-scales. They are general self-esteem (16 items), social or peer self-esteem (eight items), personal self-esteem (eight items) and lie or defensiveness items (eight items). The lie subtest measures defensiveness. People who respond defensively to self-esteem items refuse to admit that they have characteristics of a generally valid but socially unacceptable nature. For the purpose of this study, the researcher measured participants' responses using a six-point Likert-type scale.

Battle (1992) has found evidence of the validity of the CFSEI2-AD. The factor analysis of Battle (1992) confirms the construct validity of the CFSEI2-AD. In terms of reliability, Battle (1992) reports test-retest correlations of between .79 'and .82. Internal consistency reliability coefficients ranged between .79 and .92 for all the subscales (Battle, 1992).

Employability Attributes Scale: The Employability Attributes Scale (Bezuidenhout, 2010; Coetzee, 2010) has been developed for the Indian higher education context to measure students' self-perceived employability attributes.

The EAS (Bezuidenhout, 2010; Coetzee, 2010) is a self-rated, multi-factorial measure that contains 56 items and eight sub-scales. They are career self-management (11 items), cultural competence (five items), self-efficacy (six items), career resilience (six items), sociability (seven items), entrepreneurial orientation (seven items), proactivity (seven items) and emotional literacy (seven items).

Respondents must rate each item on a six-point Likert-type scale. The higher the number, the more true that item is to the respondent. An exploratory factor analysis (Coetzee, 2010) and inter-item correlational analyses showed that the EAS items meet the psychometric criteria of construct validity. In terms of reliability (internal consistency), Cronbach's Alpha coefficients range between .78 and .90 for each subscale (Coetzee, 2010).

5. Results

Table 1 gives the internal consistency of the measurements for the item separation index and reliability, the person separation index and reliability, the person reliability in terms of Cronbach's alpha coefficients, the average measure of each dimension per person and item as well as the infit and outfit statistics for each dimension.

Table 1 shows acceptable item reliability ($\geq$ .80) for all dimensions. This indicates that these items are well differentiated amongst the variables. The item separation for most dimensions was sufficient compared to the

guideline of > 2.00 (Fox & Jones, 1998). The person fit for most of the self-esteem variables was lower that the proposed guideline (> 2.00). The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all the dimensions were acceptable (cut-off point of .70). However, social or peer self-esteem (.66) and the lie items (.63) were lower. The proactivity dimension showed the highest person average (1.67, SD = 1.14) and the items of self-esteem showed the lowest average measure (-.24, SD = .46). It is clear that the mean item and person fit were acceptable and that the responses do not underfit or overfit.

Table1: Person and Item Reliability – Culture Free Self-Esteem Inventory and Employability Attributes Scale.

Dimension	Constructs	Fit indices	Average measure		Infit		Outfit		Separation	Reliability	Alpha
			Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Self-esteem (CFSEI2-AD)	General self-esteem	Person	.65	.52	1.10	-.10	1.08	-.10	2.00	.80	.80
		Item	.00	.42	1.05	.20	1.08	.80	8.16	.99	-
	Social or peer self-esteem	Person	.44	.56	1.03	.10	1.04	-.10	1.38	.66	.57
		Item	.00	.40	.98	-.40	1.05	.50	8.03	.98	-
	Personal self-esteem	Person	.44	.74	1.05	-.10	1.04	-.10	1.93	.79	.77
		Item	.00	.32	1.01	.01	1.04	.40	6.28	.98	-
	Lie items	Person	-.24	.46	1.02	-.10	1.03	-.10	1.29	.63	.58
		Item	.00	.36	1.02	-.10	1.03	.10	7.84	.98	-
	Total scale	Person	.31	.26	1.03	-.20	1.04	-.10	1.89	.78	.78
		Item	.00	.42	1.03	.00	1.04	.20	9.20	.99	-
Employability attributes (EAS)	Career self-management	Person	1.39	1.14	1.05	-.10	1.04	-.10	2.50	.86	.88
		Item	.00	.27	.99	-.10	1.04	.40	3.71	.93	-
	Cultural competence	Person	1.26	1.80	.98	-.40	.99	-.40	2.50	.86	.87
		Item	.00	.58	1.00	-.20	1.00	-.30	6.76	.98	-
	Self-efficacy	Person	1.40	1.10	1.03	-.10	1.04	-.10	1.67	.74	.73
		Item	.00	.24	1.00	-.10	1.04	.30	3.08	.90	-
	Entrepreneurial orientation	Person	1.57	1.14	1.04	-.10	1.01	-.10	1.93	.79	.80
		Item	.00	.66	1.00	-.20	1.01	-.10	8.68	.99	-
	Proactivity	Person	1.67	1.27	1.03	-.10	1.02	-.10	2.09	.81	.82
		Item	.00	.53	1.02	.00	1.02	.00	6.70	.98	-
	Sociability	Person	.55	.93	1.02	-.10	1.03	-.10	1.99	.80	.75
		Item	.00	.38	1.00	-.20	1.03	.20	6.54	.98	-
	Emotional literacy	Person	1.23	1.18	1.03	-.30	1.02	-.30	2.13	.82	.82
		Item	.00	.27	.99	-.20	1.02	.10	3.64	.93	-
	Career resilience	Person	1.13	1.00	1.09	.00	1.02	-.10	1.64	.73	.70
		Item	.00	.56	.97	-.50	1.02	.00	8.12	.99	-
	Total scale	Person	.98	.78	1.09	-.10	1.05	-.20	4.83	.96	.96
		Item	.00	.41	.99	-.20	1.05	.40	6.55	.98	-

N = 304, sample size of respondents. SD, standard deviation; CFSEI2-AD, Culture Free Self-Esteem Inventory; EAS, Employability Attributes Scale.

In general, the researcher regarded the two measuring instruments as useful and reliable for interpreting the results.

Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis for the variables of interest.

In terms of self-esteem, participants obtained the highest mean scores on the CFSEI2-AD variable of general self-esteem (M = 5.52; SD = 11.11) and the lowest mean score on the lie items (M = 3.20; SD = 5.95). In terms of employability attributes, participants obtained the highest mean scores on the EAS variables of career self-management (M = 4.75; SD = 8.14) and self-efficacy (M = 4.75; SD = 4.07) and the lowest mean score on sociability (M = 4.14; SD = 5.90).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics – Culture Free Self-Esteem Inventory and Employability Attributes Scale.

Dimension	Construct	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Self-esteem (CFSEI2-AD)	General self-esteem	3.50	5.52	4.52	11.11	-.53	.00
	Social or peer self-esteem	3.00	4.88	4.31	5.57	-.26	.23
	Personal self-esteem	3.30	4.59	4.07	7.35	-.30	-.38
	Lie items	2.44	4.27	3.20	5.95	.08	-.16
	Total self-esteem	2.44	5.52	4.13	18.46	-	-
Employability attributes (EAS)	Career self-management	4.38	5.01	4.75	8.14	-.54	.21
	Cultural competence	3.90	4.67	4.30	4.70	-.23	-.12
	Self-efficacy	4.54	4.94	4.75	4.07	-.19	-.13
	Career resilience	3.66	5.09	4.60	4.28	-.36	-.62
	Sociability	3.66	4.82	4.14	5.90	-.03	-.62
	Entrepreneurial orientation	3.97	5.26	4.63	5.68	-.54	.07
	Proactivity	4.26	5.27	4.72	5.08	-.53	-.20
	Emotional literacy	4.11	4.66	4.43	5.26	-.41	.10
	Total emotional intelligence	3.66	5.27	4.57	34.09	-	-

N = 304, sample size of respondents. SD, standard deviation; CFSEI2-AD, Culture Free Self-Esteem Inventory; EAS, Employability Attributes Scale.

All variables (except for the lie items in the CFSEI2-AD) have a distribution that skews to the left. Most values concentrate on the right of the mean with extreme values to the left (skewness < 0). The lie items have a distribution that skews to the right. Most values concentrate on the left of the mean, with extreme values to the right (skewness > 0).

All the variables have a platykurtic distribution, where the values have a wider spread around the mean.

Table 3 shows that approximately 19% of the respondents were 'highly satisfied' with their current employability levels, whilst approximately 64% of the respondents were 'satisfied' with their current employability levels.

Table 3: Frequency Distribution – Employability Satisfaction.

Frequency distribution	Scale	Employability satisfaction	
		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Very dissatisfied	10	3.3
	Dissatisfied	41	13.5
	Satisfied	193	63.5
	Highly satisfied	58	19.1
	Total	302	99.3
Missing	Missing	2	.7
	Total	304	100.0

N = 304, sample size of respondents.

Testing the hypotheses

The primary aim of this study was to assess empirically whether people's self-esteem has a relationship with their employability attributes.

The researcher analyzed hypothesis 1 firstly by computing Pearson product-moment correlations and, secondly, by conducting standard multiple regressions. Hypothesis 1 proposed that self-esteem (the CFSEI2-AD variables) had a significant positive relationship with employability attributes (the EAS variables).

The second aim of this study was to assess empirically whether age, gender, race, marital status, job level, employment status and employability satisfaction significantly predict the participants' self-esteem and employability attributes.

The researcher analysed hypothesis 2 by using categorical regressions and hypothesis 3 by using independent t-tests to test for differences.

Correlational statistics

The Pearson product-moment correlations allowed the researcher to identify the direction and strength of the relationships between each of the variables.

Table 4 shows that the researcher observed a number of significantly positive relationships between the CFSEI2-AD and EAS variables. The significant correlations range between $r = .12$ and $.41$ ($p \leqslant .05$; $r \leqslant .30$, $< .49$ – medium practical effect).

Table 4 shows significant positive relationships between all subscales of the two variables.

General self-esteem had a significant relationship with:

* career self-management ($r = .32$, medium effect, $p \leqslant .05$)
* cultural competence ($r = .16$; small effect, $p \leqslant .05$)
* self-efficacy ($r = .22$; small effect, $p \leqslant .05$)
* career resilience ($r = .41$; medium effect, $p \leqslant .05$)
* sociability ($r = .31$, medium effect, $p \leqslant .05$)
* entrepreneurial orientation ($r = .28$, small practical effect, $p \leqslant .05$)
* proactivity ($r = .36$, medium effect, $p \leqslant .05$)
* emotional literacy ($r = .32$, medium effect, $p \leqslant .05$).

Social or peer self-esteem had a significant relationship with:

* career self-management ($r = .23$, small effect, $p \leqslant .05$)
* cultural competence ($r = .18$, small effect, $p \leqslant .05$)
* self-efficacy ($r = .12$, small effect, $p \leqslant .05$)
* career resilience ($r = .32$, medium effect, $p \leqslant .05$)

sociability (r = .27, small effect, p ≤ .05)

- entrepreneurial orientation (r = .17, small effect, p ≤ .05)

- proactivity (r = .28, small effect, p ≤ .05)

- emotional literacy (r = .24, small effect, p ≤ .05).

Personal self-esteem had a positive correlation with:

- career self-management (r = .21, small effect, p ≤ .05)

- cultural competence (r = .15, small effect, p ≤ .05)

- career resilience (r = .33, medium effect, p ≤ .05)

- sociability (r = .24, small effect, p ≤ .05)

- entrepreneurial orientation (r = .24, small effect, p ≤ .05)

- proactivity (r = .28, small effect, p ≤ .05)

- emotional literacy (r = .29, small effect, p ≤ .05).

It is interesting to note that personal self-esteem was the only variable that did not correlate significantly with self-efficacy. The lie items (as measured by the CFSEI2-AD) revealed a negative significant relationship between all variables of the employability attributes.

Therefore, the lie items had negative relationships with:

- career self-management (r = -.15, small effect, p ≤ .01)

- cultural competence (r = -.16, p ≤ .01, small effect)

- self-efficacy (r = -.16, p ≤ .01, small effect)

- career resilience (r = -.28, p ≤ .00, small effect)

- sociability (r = -.27, p ≤ .00, small effect)

- entrepreneurial orientation (r = -.21, p ≤ .00, small effect)

- proactivity (r = -.23, p ≤ .00, small effect)

- emotional literacy (r = -.24, p ≤ .00, small effect).

Table 4: Pearson-product Moment Correlations – Culture Free Self-Esteem Inventory and Employability Attributes Scale.

Dimension	Construct	Employability Attributes Scale							
		Career self-management	Cultural competence	Self-efficacy	Career resilience	Sociability	Entrepreneurial orientation	Proactivity	Emotional literacy
CFSEI2-AD	General self-esteem	.32**++	.16**+	.22**+	.41**++	.31**++	.28**+	.36**++	.32**++
	Social or peer self-esteem	.23**+	.18**+	.12*+	.32**++	.27**+	.17**+	.28**+	.24**+
	Personal self-esteem	.21**+	.15**+	–	.33**++	.24**+	.24**+	.28**+	.29**+
	Lie items	-.15*+	-.16**+	-.16**+	-.28**+	-.27**+	-.21**+	-.23**+	-.24**+

N = 304, sample size of respondents.

CFSEI2-AD, Culture Free Self-Esteem Inventory.

+, r ? .30 (small practical effect size); ++, r ? .30 ? .49 (medium practical effect size).

*, p ? .05 (two-tailed); **, p ? .01

Inventory and Employability Attributes Scale

Table 5 shows that the regression model explained a small (R² ? .12) and medium (.13 ? R² ? .25) practical percentage of variance (Cohen, 1992). The regression of the self-esteem variable on the career self-management variable produced a statistically significant model [F(545.98; 59.84) = 9.12;

p ? .001] and accounts for 10% (small practical effect) of the variance. General self-esteem (β = .31; p ? .01) contributed significantly to explaining the percentage of variance in career self-management (R² = 10%, small practical effect). The regression of the self-esteem variable on the cultural competence variable produced a

statistically significant model [F(83.09; 21.30) = 3.90; p ? .001] and accounts for 4% of the variance. Social self-esteem (β = .14; p ? .05) contributed significantly to explaining the percentage of variance in cultural competence (R² = 4%, small practical effect). The regression of the self-esteem variable on the self-efficacy variable produced a statistically significant model [F(86.07; 15.66) = 5.50; p ? .000] and accounts for 6% (small practical effect) of the variance. The variables that follow contributed significantly to explaining the percentage of variance in self-efficacy (6%, small practical effect): general self-esteem

(β = .32; p ? .001) and personal self-esteem (β = -.19; p ? .05). The beta-weights showed that general self-esteem makes the biggest contribution to explaining the variance in the self-efficacy variable.

The regression of the self-esteem variable on the career resilience variable produced a statistically significant model [F(262.18; 15.04) = 17.44; p ? .000] and accounts for 18% (medium practical effect) of the

variance. General self-esteem (ß = .26; p ? .01) and social or peer self-esteem (ß = .15; p ? .05) are variables that significantly contribute to explaining the percentage of variance of career resilience (R^2 = 18%, medium practical effect).

According to the beta-weights, general self-esteem was the variable that contributed most towards explaining the career resilience construct. The regression of the self-esteem variable on the sociability variable produced a statistically significant model [F(347.31; 30.58) = 11.36; p ? .000] and accounts for 12% (small practical effect) of the variance. Social or peer self-esteem (ß = .15; p ? .05) and the lie items (ß = -.17; p ? .01) contributed significantly towards explaining the percentage of variance in sociability (R^2 = 12%, small practical effect).

The regression of the self-esteem variable on the entrepreneurial orientation variable produced a

statistically significant model [F(171.09; 23.28) = 7.32; p ? .000] and accounts for 8% (small practical effect) of the variance. General self-esteem (ß = .19; p ? .05) explains the percentage of variance for entrepreneurial orientation (R^2 = 8%, small practical effect).

Finally, the regression of the self-esteem variable on the proactivity variable produced a statistically significant model [F(280.77; 22.43) = 12.52; p ? .000] and accounts for 13% (medium practical effect) of the variance. General self-esteem (ß = .23; p ? .01) and social or peer self-esteem (ß = .12; p ? .05) contribute significantly to explaining the percentage of variance of proactivity (R^2 = 13%, medium practical effect). The beta-weights indicate that general self-esteem is the biggest contributor to explaining the variance in the proactivity variable.

Table 5: Multiple Regression Analyses – Culture Free Self-Esteem Inventory and Employability Attributes Scale.

Variable	Unstandardised coefficient		Standardised coefficient (ß)	t	p	F	R	Adjusted R^2	Collinearity stats	
	B	SE B							Tolerance	VIF
Career self-management (EAS)	33.58	4.92	-	6.91	.000***	9.12†	.33	.10+	-	-
General self-esteem (CFSEI2-AD)	.23	.07	.31	3.45	.004**				.36	2.79
Cultural competence (EAS)	18.27	2.93	-	6.23	.000***	3.50†	.22	.04+	-	-
Social self-esteem (CFSEI2-AD)	.12	.06	.14	2.14	.030*				.71	1.42
Self-efficacy (EAS)	25.78	2.51	-	10.25	.000***	5.50†	.26	.06+	-	-
General self-esteem (CFSEI2-AD)	.12	.03	.32	3.40	.001***				.36	2.79
Personal self-esteem (CFSEI2-AD)	-.10	.05	-.19	-2.19	.030*	-			.43	2.30
Career resilience (EAS)	16.24	2.46	-	6.59	.000***	17.44†	.44	.18++	-	-
General self-esteem (CFSEI2-AD)	.10	.03	.26	3.03	.003**				.36	2.79
Social or peer self-esteem (CFSEI2-AD)	.12	.05	.15	2.44	.015*				.71	1.42
Sociability (EAS)	21.93	3.51	-	6.24	.000***	11.36†	.36	.12+	-	-
Social or peer self-esteem (CFSEI2-AD)	.16	.07	.15	2.29	.023*				.71	1.42
Lie items (CFSEI2-AD)	-.16	.06	-.17	-2.67	.008**	-			.75	1.33
Entrepreneurial orientation (EAS)	27.01	3.07	-	8.79	.000***	7.32†	.30	.08+	-	-
General self-esteem (CFSEI2-AD)	.09	.04	.19	2.11	.040*	-			.36	2.79
Proactivity (EAS)	22.50	3.01	-	7.48	.000***	12.52†	.38	.13++	-	-
General self-esteem (CFSEI2-AD)	.11	.04	.23	2.61	.010**				.36	2.79
Social self-esteem (CFSEI2-AD)	.11	.06	.12	1.92	.050*				.71	1.42

N = 304, sample size of respondents.

B, xxx; SE B, standard error xxx; ß, beta; t, t-test; p, probability value; F, frequency; R, correlation coefficient; R2, coefficient of determination; VIF, variance inflation factor; CFSEI2-AD, Culture Free Self Esteem Inventory; EAS, Employability Attributes Scale.

†, Constant, (4; 299).

+, R^2 ? .12 (small practical effect size); ++, R^2 ? .13 ? .25 (medium practical effect size).

*, p ? .05; **, p ? .01; ***, p ? .001

In terms of the collinearity statistics, the variance inflation factor (VIF) values were lower than the cut-off of > 4.0 for multi-collinearity concerns. These values suggest that the researcher could rule out multi-collinearity when he interpreted the results.

The results showed that the relationships the researcher measured were statistically significant in most of the relationships he tested. Therefore, it supports hypothesis 1 that self-esteem has a significant positive relationship with employability attributes.

Categorical regression analysis: Culture Free Self-Esteem Inventory and Employability Attributes Scale

Table 6 shows that the regression models explained a small (R^2 ? .12) practical effect percentage of variance (Cohen, 1992). The regression of biographical information on the career self-management variable produced a statistically significant model [$F_{(2.15; .93)}$ = 2.32; p ? .002] and accounts for 8% (small practical effect) of the variance.

The variables that follow contributed significantly to explaining the percentage of variance in career self-management (R^2 = 8%, small practical effect): race (ß = .22; p ? .001), marital status (ß = .13; p ? .01), job level (ß = .17; p ? .001), employability satisfaction (ß = .15; p ? .01) and current employment status (ß = .18; p ? .001). The beta-weights showed that race contributed the most to explaining the variance in the career self-management variable.

The regression of biographical information on the sociability variable produced a statistically significant model

[$F_{(2.26; .92)}$ = 2.46; p ? .001] and accounts for 9% (small practical effect) of the variance. The variables that follow contributed significantly to explaining the percentage of variance in sociability (R^2 = 9%, small practical effect): race (ß = .20; p ? .001), age (ß = -.21; p ? .05), marital status (ß = .16; p ? .001), job level (ß = .22; p ? .001), employability satisfaction (ß = .22; p ?

.001) and current employment status (ß = .16; p ? .001). The beta-weights showed that the participants' own employability satisfaction ('satisfied' or 'not satisfied') contributed most to explaining the variance in the sociability construct.

The regression of biographical information on the entrepreneurial orientation variable produced a statistically significant model [$F_{(1.82; .95)}$ = 1.91; p ? .03] and accounts for 6% (small practical effect) of the variance.

The variables that follow contributed significantly to explaining the percentage of variance in entrepreneurial orientation (R^2 = 6%, small practical effect): race (ß = .19; p ? .001), job level (ß = .23; p ? .001) and current employment status (ß = .20; p ? .001). Job level is the most significant contributor to entrepreneurial orientation.

The regression of biographical information on the proactivity variable produced a statistically significant model [$F_{(2.48; .90)}$ = 2.75; p ? .000] and accounts for 10% (small practical effect) of the variance.

The variables that follow contributed significantly to explaining the percentage of variance in proactivity (R^2 = 10%, small practical effect): race (ß = .25; p ? .001), gender (ß = .10; p ? .05), marital status (ß = .16; p ? .05), job level (ß = .22; p ? .001) and current employment status (ß = .17; p ? .001). The beta-weights showed that race contributed most to explaining the variance in proactivity.

Table 6: Categorical Regression Analysis – Employability Attributes Scale.

Dimension	Variable	Standardised coefficient		p	df	F	Adjusted R^2
		B	SE B				
Career self-management (EAS) (Constant)		-	-	.002	-	-	.08+
	Race	.22	.06	.00***	4	13.18	-
	Marital status	.13	.06	.01**	2	4.62	-
	Job level	.17	.07	.00***	5	6.39	-
	Employability satisfaction	.15	.07	.01**	2	4.82	-
	Current employment status	.18	.08	.00***	4	4.47	-
Sociability (EAS) (constant)		-	-	.001	-	-	.09+
	Race	.20	.06	.00***	4	12.31	-
	Age	-.21	.09	.02*	1	5.41	-
	Marital status	.16	.06	.00***	2	7.15	-
	Job level	.22	.08	.00***	5	7.74	-
	Employability satisfaction	.22	.06	.00***	2	13.47	-
	Current employment status	.16	.08	.00***	4	4.45	-
Entrepreneurial orientation (EAS) (constant)		-	-	.013	-	-	.06+
	Race	.19	.06	.00***	4	10.54	-
	Job level	.23	.08	.00***	5	9.72	-
	Current employment status	.20	.08	.00***	4	5.35	-
Proactivity (EAS) (constant)		-	-	.000	-	-	.10+
	Race	.25	.05	.00***	4	27.07	-
	Gender	.10	.05	.05*	1	3.70	-
	Marital status	.16	.06	.00***	2	7.21	-
	Job level	.22	.07	.00***	5	11.08	-
	Current employment status	.17	.08	.00***	4	4.16	-

B, xxx; SE B, standard error xxx; p, probability value; df, degree of freedom; F, frequency; R2, coefficient of determination; EAS, Employability Attributes Scale.

+, $R^2 \leqslant .12$ (small practical effect size).

*, $p \leqslant .05$; **, $p \leqslant .01$; ***, $p \leqslant .001$

The categorical regression analysis for self-esteem revealed no statistically significant positive relationships with race, gender, age, marital status, job level, employability satisfaction or current employment status. Therefore, it did not provide sufficient support for hypothesis 2 (that age, gender, race, marital status, job level, current employment status and employability satisfaction predict self-esteem).

Independent t-test: Culture Free Self-Esteem Inventory and Employability Attributes Scale

The independent t-test results and mean scores (see Table 7) showed that the men participants obtained a significantly higher mean score than did their women counterparts on the EAS career self-management variable (M = 453.41; SD = 7.97). The women participants obtained slightly higher mean scores on the lie items of the self-esteem construct (M = 26.32; SD = 5.95).

The researcher observed no other significant gender differences for any of the other self-esteem and employability attributes variables. The results provided some support for hypothesis 3 (men and women differ significantly in self-esteem and employability attributes).

Table 7: Independent t-test – Differences in Gender Scores on the Measurement Dimensions.

Dimensions	Constructs	Group	N	Mean	SD	Levene's equality of F	Test for variances Sig.	t-test	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Employability attributes (EAS)	Career self-management	Men	111	53.41	7.97	.03-	.86-	1.89	302	.06*
		Women	193	51.59	8.18	.	.	.	.	.
Self-esteem (CFSEI2-AD)	Lie items	Men	111	24.47	5.80	.39	.53	-2.64	302	.01**
		Women	193	26.32	5.95	.	.	.	.	.

N, number; SD, standard deviation; F, frequency; Sig., significance; t, t-test; df, degree of freedom; EAS, Employability Attributes Scale; CFSEI2-AD, Culture Free Self-esteem Inventory.

*, $p \leqslant .05$; **, $p \leqslant .01$

6. Findings and Discussions

The effect of challenges, like fewer employment opportunities and reduced job security, increased personal responsibility to keep up with changes, current skill shortages and demands for retaining talented and skilled staff, have led to an emphasis on career meta-competencies to improve employability attributes (Coetzee, 2008; Fugate et al., 2004). Career counsellors and human resource practitioners have been concerned for a long time about employees' psychological career resources or career meta-competencies that enable them to take ownership of their careers and be proactive in managing their careers and improving their employability (Coetzee, 2008; Fugate et al., 2004).

The significant relationship the researcher observed between self-esteem and employability attributes suggests that people with higher self-esteem will have higher employability attributes. These findings agree with those of Fugate et al. (2004) and those of Griffen and Hesketh (2005).

The significant relationship the researcher observed between general self-esteem, social or peer self-esteem, personal self-esteem and career self-management showed that people who believe in themselves and feel good about themselves are more likely to take proactive steps to develop and manage their own careers. Marock (2008) suggested that people should take responsibility for managing their careers and posits that people who have higher levels of psychological career resources are generally more able to manage their careers and adapt to changing circumstances. As a result, they showed higher levels of employability (Fugate,

et al., 2004; Griffin & Hesketh, 2005). Bezuidenhout (2010) associates confidence with achieving one's career goals, and persistence in doing so, with efficient levels of career self-management. Any person who has high confidence should have a high level of general, social or peer and personal self-esteem. Therefore, people with high self-esteem should be able to manage their careers efficiently. Similarly, the significant relationship the researcher found between general, social or peer and personal self-esteem as well as cultural competence seems to suggest that people with high levels of self-esteem will be able to understand, act and interact effectively with diverse cultural environments.

This study confirms Bezuidenhout's (2010) view of cultural

competence, where confident people find it easy (and enjoyable) to communicate inter-culturally and are able to initiate, interact and maintain relationships with people from diverse cultures. Baumeister (2005) confirms that people who are able to initiate and maintain relationships generally have higher levels of self-esteem.

Therefore, one can conclude that people with high self-esteem will show higher levels of cultural competence.

The relationship the researcher observed between general self-esteem and social self-esteem with self-efficacy showed that people with high self-esteem keep up to date with the latest developments in their jobs and careers. In addition, the findings showed that people with high self-esteem are able to function independently, make their own decisions and are confident about accomplishing their career goals. Kerka (1998) confirms these findings. He states that people with high self-esteem are generally more able to make career decisions and achieve their goals. Therefore, participants with high self-esteem showed higher levels of self-efficacy.

The results showed that people with high general, social or peer and personal self-esteem have significantly higher levels of career resilience. According to Schreuder and Coetzee (2011), career resilience refers to the ability to adapt to changing circumstances by welcoming job and organizational changes, looking forward to working with new and different people, having self-confidence and being willing to take risks. The researcher found that people with high levels of self-confidence and high self-esteem influence each other significantly. Therefore, participants with high self-esteem may have higher career resilience.

The significant relationship the researcher observed between general, social or peer and personal self-esteem with sociability suggest that people with high self-esteem will be open to establishing and maintaining social contacts and using formal and informal networks to advance their careers. Bezuidenhout (2010) also noted that sociability implies having self-confidence and that high self-confidence also suggests high overall self-esteem. Participants with high self-esteem may appear more sociable. Similarly, the relationship the researcher found between general, social or peer and personal self-esteem and entrepreneurial orientation showed that people with high self-esteem would exploit career opportunities in the career environment. Bezuidenhout (2010) noted that entrepreneurial orientation includes a positive feeling about the implications of change in the workplace and feeling comfortable in uncertain situations. One generally measures self-esteem against positive or negative feelings (Maslow, 1970). Therefore, participants with high self-esteem will be more orientated towards becoming entrepreneurs as they feel positive about

themselves and will show high levels of self-confidence and ability to adapt to changing circumstances.

The researcher also found that general, social and personal self-esteem have significant relationships with proactivity. According to Bezuidenhout (2010), people with high proactivity will typically initiate self-improvement and accept responsibility for their decisions. People who have high career meta-competencies (like self-esteem) are generally more able to adapt to changing circumstances, take risks, initiate self-development and make career decisions more easily (Fugate et al., 2004; Griffen & Hesketh, 2005). Participants with high self-esteem seem more proactive compared to participants with low self-esteem.

General, social or peer and personal self-esteem have significant relationships with emotional literacy. People with high emotional literacy are able to use emotions adaptively, read, understand and manage their own emotions as well as the emotions of others. Several authors suggest that emotional literacy and self-esteem have close relationships with each other and that people with high self-esteem and emotional literacy show high levels of overall employability (Briscoe & Hall, 1999; Coetzee, 2008; Coetzee & Roythorne-Jacobs, 2007; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Herr et al., 2004). Therefore, participants with high self-esteem are more emotionally literate than are those with low self-esteem.

The researcher found no significant relationships between age, gender, race, marital status, job level, current employment status and employability satisfaction or self-esteem. Therefore, it is not necessary to consider these variables during career development support practices and career counselling sessions that aim to improve self-esteem. However, these findings contradict those of Brandstadter and Greve (1994), Demo (1992), Orth et al. (2010) and Xu et al. (2009). The significant relationships the researcher observed between age, gender, race, marital status, job level, current employment status and employability satisfaction showed that one should consider these variables during career development support practices and career counselling interventions that aim to improve employability attributes.

The study revealed that the men participants seem to be slightly better at managing their careers than the women participants are. Therefore, they showed slightly higher employability attributes. These results agree with the studies of Clarke (2008), Lee (2001) as well as those of Scandura and Lankau (1997). They also found that men are slightly more employable than women are. One needs to consider these differences during career development support practices and career counselling interventions that aim to improve employability attributes. Therefore, one should introduce interventions that are more extensive to improve the employability attributes of women.

Race, marital status, job level, current employment status and employability satisfaction showed a significant relationship with career self-management. However, researchers need to conduct further studies on which race, marital status and job level groups display higher levels of career self-management. The results showed that race, age, marital status, job level, current employment status as well as employability satisfaction have significant relationships with sociability. It seems that these factors predict the level of sociability of a person. Race, job level and current employment status significantly influence entrepreneurial orientation, whilst race, marital status, job level and current employment status influence proactivity.

It is clear that race, job level and current employment status are the most important factors that influence employability attributes. However, researchers need to conduct further research to determine which race, job level and employment status levels most significantly influence employability attributes.

One should consider all the influencing factors during career development support practices and

career-counselling interventions that aim to improve the employability attributes of people.

7. Conclusions

The world of work and work contexts have changed dramatically during the 21st century (Amundson, 2006; Blickle & Witzki, 2008; Burke & Ng, 2006; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Jones & DeFillipi, 1996; Luthans, Luthans & Luthans, 2004; Richardson, 2002). As a result, careers have also changed and moved away from the traditional career context to boundaryless careers. The skills and abilities required from young adults who are entering the world of work have also changed.

Several essential factors determine a person's occupational interests and abilities. They include a person's background and social demographic status (like age, gender and race), personal characteristics (like self-esteem, self-awareness, decision-making ability, personality preferences, emotional intelligence and employability attributes), experience (like work, academic experience and hobbies) and initial skill levels (like cognitive abilities, technical skills and interpersonal skills) (Beukes, 2010; Feldman, 2002). Current career-counselling practices face challenges because of the radical changes in lifestyles, the technological advancement and information explosion of the 21st century (Maree & Beck, 2004).

For people to stand the best chance of finding jobs in which they will be satisfied and successful, education in career self-management and career development learning is important (Coetzee & Beukes, 2010; Pool & Sewell, 2007). Career development learning typically

includes activities to help people become more self-aware. It allows them to do the things that they are interested in, enjoy doing and that motivate them.

In addition, people need to learn how best to present themselves to prospective employers, how to behave in interviews and in jobs and how to make careful decisions about their careers (Coetzee & Beukes, 2010). Therefore, it is important to help people to improve their employability skills.

The findings of this study confirmed that career meta-competencies (like self-esteem) do influence employability attributes significantly. Therefore, one should address them during career development support practices and career-counselling interventions that aim to improve employability attributes.

In addition, this study confirmed that biographical details (like age, gender, race, marital status, job level, current employment status and employability satisfaction levels) also predict employability attributes. One needs to consider these differences when one aims to improve employability attributes.

The findings highlight the need for further research to explore the relationships between career meta-competencies, biographical predictors and employability attributes. The practical value of the findings is the new knowledge they yielded about the relationships between these variables and the factors they highlight as contributors to improving self-esteem, acknowledging diversity and improving employability attributes.

Possible limitations of the study and suggestions for future research

The researcher limited the present study to participants who were studying for an honours degree in business management in a Indian higher education institution. Therefore, one cannot generalise the findings to other occupational contexts. Furthermore, given the exploratory nature of the research design, this study can make no statements about causation. Therefore, the researcher has only inferred that there are associations between the variables but has not establihed any. Consequently, one needs to replicate these findings with broader samples in different occupational groups and economic sectors before one can draw comprehensive conclusions about the relationships between people's self-esteem and their employability attributes.

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