

Predictors of career satisfaction among working women: Mediating role of supportive resources

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Orientation: Not with standing legislative reforms and advocacy to empower women to realise their potential for success, the careers of women are still marred by obstacles and a lack of supportive initiatives, both in the workplace and in society at large.

Research purpose: The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and career satisfaction among working women. The study also investigates the mediating role of perceived organisational support and social support in this relationship.

Motivation for the study: This study seeks to understand how the trait of emotional intelligence influences career satisfaction among working women, with supportive resources serving as mediators. This understanding is particularly relevant in light of the growing participation of women in the workforce.

Research approach/design and method: The study utilised a cross-sectional survey from a sample consisting of 606 working women affiliated with professional bodies in South Africa. Mediation modelling was used to test the hypotheses of the study.

Main findings: The results of the mediation modelling analysis indicated that perceived organisational and social support strengthened the links between emotional intelligence and career satisfaction.

Practical/managerial implications: Organisations should recognise the importance of workplace-supportive resources in enhancing the relationship between emotional intelligence and career satisfaction. Moreover, women can benefit from relational instrumental and personal support derived from the workplace and significant others.

Contribution/value-add: This study expands the limited literature on the mediating role of supportive resources in the relationship between emotional intelligence and career satisfaction. It highlights the need to implement supportive initiatives that can enhance emotional intelligence and ultimately increase career satisfaction for women.

Keywords: career advancement; emotional intelligence; subjective career success satisfaction supportive resources; women professionals; workplace.

Introduction

Women are a necessary diverse asset to the economic growth and prosperity of emerging economies. Although significant progress has been observed in women's education, this has not resulted in similar outcomes in the workplace in terms of reducing gender inequality and meaningful participation in the workforce (Agrawal & Singh, 2022; Hing et al., 2023). Gender inequality is multifaceted, and for women, some of the inequalities are evident in human resource (HR) policies such as promotion, career progression and skills development (Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015). It is evident that, given the talent and unique needs of women, supportive resources are necessary to promote their growth and career advancement. However, various barriers that women face have been identified that lead to limited support in their career development activities and satisfaction at work (Koekemoer et al., 2023; Napasri & Yukongdi, 2015).

A review of the literature suggested that barriers to the career development of women consist of personal, interpersonal, organisational and societal factors (Linge, 2015; Napasri & Yukongdi, 2015). For instance, the enacted barriers relating to stereotypical early-gendered roles, family responsibilities and workplace unequal practices were perceived as the main impediments to a woman's career growth and advancement (Linge, 2015; Napasri & Yukongdi, 2015).

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Moreover, developing economies are traditionally male dominated, ascribing men as breadwinners and heads of the family, whereas women undertake dual responsibilities of home and work (Agrawal & Singh, 2022). Although women can perform just as skilfully as men, the gender inequities that are evident across the employment lifecycle often hinder their career aspirations (Hing et al., 2023). These impediments can have a significant impact on a woman's personal identity and her aspirations for career development and satisfaction (Koekemoer et al., 2023).

Emotions play an important role in workplace productivity and success. Researchers have identified an association between emotional intelligence and various relevant aspects of the occupational environment (Brackett et al., 2011; Urquijo et al., 2019). More specifically, individuals with higher emotional intelligence tend to be engaged with their work and experience higher job satisfaction (D'Amico et al., 2020). In addition, higher emotional intelligence can help foster understanding among work peers and cultivate better relationships, leading to increased sensitivity to the emotional states of others (Hamid & Amir Ishak, 2019). As a result, emotional intelligence has inspired researchers to explore its relationships with organisationally relevant outcomes such as career decision-making and success (Hamid & Amir Ishak, 2019; Mayer et al., 2017). Nonetheless, there has been little research into how working women can utilise their emotional processes to successfully maintain a competitive edge in their personal and organisational lives to allow them to achieve career satisfaction. Inadvertently, women often have numerous life roles to play, and therefore, more supportive resources are required to facilitate their career progression to allow them to contribute positively to the workplace and the economy. This study investigated the role played by emotional intelligence in enhancing career satisfaction. Furthermore, the author examined the mediating effect of perceived organisational support (POS) and social support between emotional intelligence and career satisfaction.

Career success is defined as the positive perception of accomplishments or achievements that individuals will achieve because of their work experiences over a period (Koekemoer et al., 2023). Extrinsic career success is regarded as a tangible criterion, such as a salary or promotion, while intrinsic success is more salient, with subjective outcomes (such as life balance, goal fulfilment or career satisfaction) as experienced by the individual (Urquijo et al., 2019). The influence of work centrality on career satisfaction is often stronger for women than men (Mayrhofer et al., 2008). Tlaiss and Kauser (2011) revealed that the career success of women managers could be attributed more to subjective satisfaction outcomes, rather than the objective outcomes of their careers. Afioni (2014) also pointedly suggested that traditional gender roles and the needs of family and significant others often shape the personal narratives of women's career success.

Sociocultural beliefs result in biased perceptions of women's competence at various career-related tasks, and the lack of supportive behaviours in organisations often works against women (Agrawal & Singh, 2022). Therefore, it is a considered view that supportive resources can enhance the emotional intelligence capabilities of women and possibly contribute to their subjective career satisfaction. While Opatha and Yoshi (2024) investigated the moderating role of social and organisational support on the effectiveness of emotional intelligence training, Liu (2018) explored the mediating role of social support in the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. Agrawal and Singh (2021), similarly, examined the moderating role of POS and marital status in the relationship between subjective career success and proactive career behaviour, as well as family support, Ouyang et al. (2015) examined organisational justice and job security as mediators in the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. Lately, Takawira (2024) showed that POS and social support acted as mediators in the form of work peers and family to enhance the relationship between women's self-efficacy and their career satisfaction. However, there is still a paucity of research on the mediating role of perceived organisational and social support in the relationship between emotional intelligence and career satisfaction among working women. Therefore, the foregoing discussion highlights the importance of further examining the current variables to determine their influence on the career satisfaction of working women.

The objectives of this study are twofold. Firstly, to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and career satisfaction and secondly to determine the extent to which POS and social support as supportive resources mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence and career satisfaction among working women. Explicitly, the current research aims to address the following research questions:

1. *How does emotional intelligence relate to career satisfaction?*
2. *Do supportive resources mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence and career satisfaction?*

Literature review

Emotional intelligence and career satisfaction

The current study adopted the definition by Salovey et al. (2003), stating that emotional intelligence comprises capabilities to monitor one's own and other's emotions discriminately and to use the information to think and act in a way that promotes emotional and intellectual growth. In developing the measure of emotional intelligence, Schutte et al. (2009) denoted emotional intelligence as a tendency to perceive, understand, regulate and harness emotions adaptively in the self and others. By so doing, Schutte et al. (2009) identified; (1) perception of emotion, (2) managing own emotion, (3) managing others' emotions and (4) utilisation of emotion as necessary dimensions of emotional intelligence. Alternatively, Bar-On (2010) argued that emotional intelligence is a cross-section of interrelated

emotional and social competencies that determine the way individuals effectively understand others and express themselves, relate and cope with the daily demands of life. Thus, emotional intelligence helps employees to experience more positive feelings and to accomplish performance goals (Hamid & Amir Ishak, 2019).

Emotional intelligence continues to attract research, and scholars have acknowledged its role in providing the necessary skills that are linked to positive work attitudes, behaviour and outcomes (Mayer et al., 2017; Mérida-López et al., 2022). Additionally, the Job Demands-Resource (JD-R) theory by Bakker and Demerouti (2017) posits that personal resources, such as emotional intelligence, have been observed to explain between-person differences concerning their levels of work-related outcomes and, eventually, the extent to which some professionals experience satisfaction with their jobs and careers (Hamid & Amir Ishak, 2019; Mérida-López et al., 2022; Urquijo et al., 2019). For instance, Urquijo et al. (2019) showed that individuals with higher emotional intelligence tend to perceive more job success. Ultimately, emotionally intelligent individuals can mitigate negative job experiences and maintain a positive outlook by effectively assessing and managing their work environment.

Matthews et al. (2012) posited that emotionally intelligent employees tend to perceive themselves as more socially competent, are likely to have better quality personal relationships and are also viewed by others as more interpersonally sensitive than those lower in emotional intelligence. Moreover, people who possess a higher level of emotional intelligence are self-aware, sociable, optimistic and resilient (Hamid & Amir Ishak, 2019). Mayer et al. (2017) highlighted empathy and social responsibility among women leaders who express the values of caring, nurturing and empathetic understanding to promote constructive work relationships. These findings provide preliminary evidence of the relevance of exploring the significance of emotional intelligence in the career satisfaction of working women.

Scientific literature conceptualises emotional intelligence using the following three approaches: (1) the ability model that deals with emotion-related cognitive abilities as measured by performance tests (Mayer et al., 2016); (2) the trait model that focusses on the emotion-related dispositions associated with self-perception and social functioning as measured by self-reporting surveys (Petrides & Furnham, 2003) and (3) the mixed model or ability-trait model, which is a combination of both ability and trait emotional intelligence (Salovey et al., 2003). Though the three models can be useful in the prediction of relevant workplace outcomes, the present study adopted the ability-trait (mixed) model of emotional intelligence. The mixed model method to evaluate emotional intelligence is beneficial because it utilises self-reports to collect emotional intelligence competencies in day-to-day life situations (Schutte et al., 2009).

Career satisfaction denotes the appraisal of the accumulated experiences in one's career over time (Hagmaier et al., 2018). The social comparison theory (SCT) postulates that people have an inherent propensity to evaluate themselves, often in comparison to others, to gain accurate self-evaluations with a view to accomplishing life goals (Heslin, 2003). Consistent with the SCT, individuals evaluate their career satisfaction relative to the expectations and outcomes attained by other individuals or in alignment with their personal aspirations (Corcoran et al., 2011). Srikanth and Israel (2012) are of the view that career satisfaction is an internally defined outcome experienced through one's choice of career and is associated with the development and attainment of personal and professional career goals. Heslin (2003) posited that self-referent success standards largely reflect the individual's career-related standards and aspirations. In contrast, other-referent standards comprise comparisons with others, such as market-related pay or collegial objective career progression comparisons in or outside the organisation (Corcoran et al., 2011). Agrawal and Singh (2022) observed that employees with high career satisfaction are more engaged with the organisation and contribute more to the growth of the organisation. Similarly, Mafini and Dlodlo (2014) found that satisfied employees are committed to their work and participate positively in work activities. Conversely, Zakaria et al. (2017) found that career women experienced low career satisfaction in the acknowledgement at work and the relationship with the employer.

The above discussion provides evidence that emotional intelligence is a relevant addition to enhance the achievement of career satisfaction (Hamid & Amir Ishak, 2019; Urquijo et al., 2019). Accordingly, understanding others' emotions and the ability to manage them can help an individual gain satisfaction with their careers (Hamid & Amir Ishak, 2019). Hence, emotional intelligence capabilities play a significant role and are more associated with higher levels of career satisfaction. Thus, the following hypothesis was formulated for the present study:

H1: There is a statistically significant positive association between emotional intelligence and career satisfaction.

Supportive resources as mediators in the relationship between emotional intelligence and career satisfaction

Organisational support theory (OST) suggests POS is defined as employees generalised perception concerning the degree to which the organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 2020). Founded on the social exchange theory (SET) and the norm of reciprocity, OST postulates that in the presence of positive employee resources, POS will persuade employees to feel an obligation to help the organisation reach its goal (Kurtessis et al., 2017). Moreover, OST assumes that POS satisfies important socioemotional needs in the workplace in the form of a need for affiliation, emotional support or approval, which may result in self-enhancement processes (Caesens et al., 2017).

When SET and self-enhancement principles are at play, high POS can lead to positive outcomes for both organisations and individuals (Caesens & Stinglhamber, 2020). Maan et al. (2020) demonstrated that POS positively influences psychological empowerment and job satisfaction. Seema and Sujatha (2017) showed a significant relationship between POS and career success in terms of career prospects, career commitment and career satisfaction. In contrast, Park (2018) found that organisational mobility preference negatively affected the career satisfaction of employees, while external support seeking had positive effects on career satisfaction. Pervin and Khan (2022) revealed that organisational career management and organisation support and rewarding systems positively impacted employees' career satisfaction.

Eisenberger et al (2020) postulated that employees' perception that the organisation will fulfil their socioemotional needs (need for approval, esteem, emotional support and affiliation) may result in identification with the organisation and, in turn, develop values like those of the organisation. Conversely, Caesens and Stinglhamber (2020) argued that, as viewed by the organisation, when POS is present in surplus, it could be perceived by employees as indicating incompetence or lack of confidence, resulting in a reduction in employee performance. Regardless, Takawira (2024) showed that supportive resources from workplace peers, family and significant others may promote the career satisfaction of working women.

Like POS, social support represents the reciprocal exchanges and flow of resources provided on the job, as well as the personal or non-work-based network of supportive relationships (Sjolander & Ahlstrom, 2012). For the purposes of this study, social support is defined as the resource stemming from a network of family, friends and significant others and can include three basic levels of emotional, instrumental and informational support (Kostova et al., 2015). Alternatively, social support could be viewed as practical and visible support, along with direct physical assistance from a social network (Xu et al., 2017). On the contrary, individuals socially excluded from these relationships may feel unsupported because they lack the close relationships that can afford them access to social networks in the workplace (Sloan et al., 2013). Despite low levels of social support, a study by Wu et al. (2020) showed that social support is related positively to work satisfaction. McGuire (2007) concurred and reported that support in the workplace, in the form of general conversations between co-workers, sharing and listening to one another, was necessary. Accordingly, the inclusion of social support shows that both emotional and instrumental support from family networks play a necessary role for employees in the workplace (Annink et al., 2016).

According to Pervin and Khan (2022), supportive resources positively impact employees' career satisfaction and empowerment to commit to career advancement. Likewise, emotional intelligence skills exert a positive influence on

individuals' perceptions and feelings regarding their jobs, thereby showing positive associations with both the organisation and satisfaction with careers (Mérida-López et al., 2022). Moreover, the ability to manage and control emotions and the support employees receive from the workplace tend to have a significant impact on their career satisfaction (Sembiring et al., 2021). Mérida-López et al. (2022) suggested that the effect of emotional intelligence on enhanced work satisfaction may occur not only directly but also indirectly through positive social relationships. Thus, employees with higher emotional intelligence skills should feel more capable of controlling work environment characteristics, triggering greater satisfaction and positive feelings in their working organisation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Mérida-López et al., 2022). While the information provided up to this point shows that organisational and social support have positive consequences, a strong argument has been made to examine the mediating role of supportive resources in the relationship between emotional intelligence and career satisfaction. Therefore, the present study proposes that supportive resources create a link to enhance the relationship between emotional intelligence and career satisfaction among working women:

H2: Perceived organisational support and social support mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence and career satisfaction.

Research design

Participants and context

Data were collected through a non-probability purposive sample ($N = 606$) targeting professionally qualified women in the financial, engineering and HR professional fields (62% = white women; 38% = black African, Coloured and Indian women). About 85% of the participants were in the early adulthood and establishment career stage (aged 25–44 years). Overall, 74% of the participants obtained a postgraduate qualification, as anticipated in the accounting and engineering professions, as expected at the entry level of careers. Equally, most of the participants were married (67%) and occupied managerial-level positions (66%) in their organisations.

Measures

Emotional intelligence. The Assessing Emotions Scale (AES) (Schutte et al., 2009), a 33-item measure includes the perception of emotion (10 items, e.g. 'I am aware of my emotions as I experience them'), managing own emotions (nine items, e.g. 'I have control over my emotions'), managing others' emotions (eight items, e.g. 'I like to share my emotions with others') and utilisation of emotions (six items, e.g. 'When my mood changes, I see new possibilities'). A five-point Likert-type response format ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree was utilised. High scores on the AES imply the respondent's level of emotional intelligence. The present study yielded Cronbach's alpha values of between 0.70 and 0.84 for the subscales. Additionally, the Cronbach alpha value for the overall scale was 0.91.

Career satisfaction. The Career Satisfaction Scale (CSS) (Greenhaus et al., 1990) comprised five items (e.g. 'I am satisfied with the progress I have made towards meeting my overall career goals'). A five-point Likert-type response format ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree was utilised. High scores implied high levels of career satisfaction. The current study attained a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.92.

Perceived organisational support. The Scale Perceived Organisational Support (SPOS) (Eisenberger et al., 1986) consisted of 36 items (e.g. 'The organisation strongly considers my goals and values'). A seven-point Likert-type response format ranging from 0 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree was utilised. High scores suggest participants perceived their organisation as supportive of their career goals and work activities. The present study achieved a Cronbach's alpha of 0.96.

Social support. The social support scale with the 12-item Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) (Zimet et al., 1988) consisted of three subscales: family (four items, e.g. 'I get the emotional help and support I need from my family'); friends (four items, e.g. 'I have friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows') and significant others (four items, e.g. 'There is a special person who is around when I am in need'). A seven-point Likert-type response format ranging from 1 = very strongly disagree to 7 = very strongly agree was utilised. Overall, high scores suggested high levels of perception of social support. The current study yielded Cronbach's alpha values of between 0.93 and 0.97 for the subscales. The Cronbach's alpha value for the overall scale was 0.94.

Procedure

Statistical analysis. Multiple mediations by means of the simple mediation technique and using bootstrapping (bias-corrected [BC]) in IBM SPSS (2015), as suggested by Preacher and Hayes (2008), was utilised to test the mediation effect of the supportive resources (perceived organisational and social support) on the emotional intelligence and career satisfaction

relationship. Overall, in bootstrapping methods, BC bootstrapping of the confidence intervals (CIs) for indirect effects entails multiple repeated samples with replacement from the data set in question to arrive at a model under study (Leth-Steensen & Gallitto, 2016). The mediation technique evaluated the indirect effect of emotional intelligence on career satisfaction through supportive resources (POS and social support).

According to Rucker et al. (2011), four requirements should be met to establish the significance of mediating effects. Firstly, emotional intelligence (i.e. independent variable) should significantly predict career satisfaction (i.e. dependent variable). Secondly, emotional intelligence (i.e. independent variable) should significantly predict POS and social support (i.e. mediators). Thirdly, as mediators, POS and social support significantly predict career satisfaction (i.e. dependent variable). Fourthly, emotional intelligence is significantly reduced (partial mediation) after statistically controlling for the mediators (POS and social support). Moreover, the standard bootstrapping bias corrected at 95% lower and upper CIs should exclude zero to support the significant indirect effect of the applicable mediator variables (Leth-Steensen & Gallitto, 2016; Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from the University of South Africa (UNISA), College of Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Review Committee (REF."2025_CEMS_IOP_004) and the management of the professional bodies gave permission to advance the research study. All procedures performed in conducting this study were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee and the 1964 Helsinki declaration as amended. Data were collected through an online web survey, by way of an electronic link via email to the participants from their respective professional bodies. The ethical principles to protect the will and respect for the participants (written consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and withdrawal and data storage) were upheld.

TABLE 1: Means, standard deviations, reliabilities and correlations among constructs ($N = 606$).

Number	Variables	M	SD	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	AES overall scale (IV)	3.86	0.63	0.94	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	Perception of emotions	3.83	0.56	0.84	0.79***	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	Managing own emotions	4.10	0.53	0.81	0.83***	0.50***	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	Managing others' emotions	3.94	0.49	0.70	0.81***	0.49***	0.61***	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5	Utilisation of emotions	3.92	0.53	0.70	0.63***	0.28***	0.43***	0.45***	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6	Overall SPOS scale (IV)	4.65	1.16	0.96	0.18***	0.13**	0.22***	0.13**	0.05	-	-	-	-	-	-
7	Overall MSPSS scale (IV)	5.81	1.14	0.94	0.25***	0.16***	0.24***	0.25***	0.12**	0.22***	-	-	-	-	-
8	Family	5.89	1.33	0.93	0.23***	0.11**	0.23***	0.22***	0.15**	0.21***	0.84***	-	-	-	-
9	Friends	5.57	1.33	0.95	0.24***	0.18***	0.21***	0.24***	0.09*	0.25***	0.77***	0.49***	-	-	-
10	Significant others	5.97	1.50	0.97	0.15**	0.10*	0.15**	0.15**	0.07	0.09*	0.84***	0.60***	0.43***	-	-
11	Overall career satisfaction scale (DV)	3.76	0.98	0.92	0.22***	0.13**	0.29***	0.17***	0.05	0.51***	0.30***	0.31***	0.23***	0.22***	-

Note: Correlation values ≤ 0.29 are practically significant (small effect); $\geq 0.30 \leq 0.49$ are practically significant (medium effect). Correlation values ≥ 0.50 are practically significant (large effect). M, mean; SD, standard deviation; α , Cronbach's alpha coefficient; AES, Assessing Emotions Scale; MSPSS, Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support; SPOS, Scale Perceived Organisational Support.

*, $p \leq 0.05$; **, $p \leq 0.01$; ***, $p \leq 0.001$.

Results

Descriptive statistics

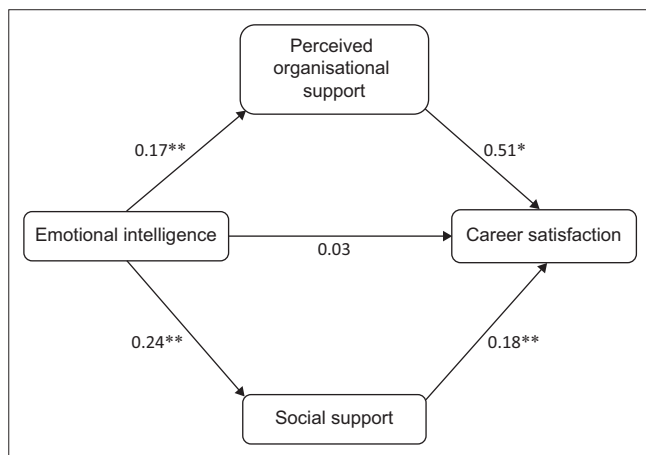
The results of the bivariate correlation, as presented in Table 1, show a significant positive association between supportive resources, emotional intelligence and career satisfaction ($r \geq 0.09 \leq r \leq 0.51$; small to large practical effect; $p \leq 0.05$), suggesting that the more emotionally intelligent and supported the employee, the more career satisfaction. However, no significant associations were found between the emotional intelligence subdimension of utilisation of emotions and the overall POS, as well as the social support subdimension of significant others. Also, no significant association was found between the emotional intelligence subdimension of utilisation of emotions and career satisfaction.

Table 1 shows that the results supported the following hypothesis:

H1: There is a statistically significant positive association between emotional intelligence and career satisfaction.

Mediation effect of perceived organisational support and social support in the association between emotional intelligence and career satisfaction

The simple mediation model estimation and CI through the bootstrapping approach (see Table 2 and Figure 1) showed that the mediation role of POS and social support in the



*, $p \leq 0.05$; **, $p \leq 0.01$.

FIGURE 1: Path coefficients from the mediation model.

relationship between emotional intelligence and career satisfaction was significant. However, only three of the four conditions, as proposed by Rucker et al. (2011), for significant mediation were met because emotional intelligence (the independent variable) was not directly related to career satisfaction (the dependent variable).

Table 2 and Figure 1 show that the direct effect of emotional intelligence on career satisfaction was not significant, once the perceived organisational and social support had been considered as mediating variables ($\beta = 0.03$; $p = 0.439$; lower CI -0.04 , upper CI 0.10). Emotional intelligence had significant direct paths to perceived organisational and social support ($\beta = 0.17$; 0.24 ; $p \leq 0.01$ – positive pathway; lower CI 0.09 ; 0.15 , upper CI 0.26 ; 0.33). Perceived organisational support had a significant direct path to career satisfaction ($\beta = 0.51$; $p \leq 0.05$ – positive pathway; lower CI 0.44 , upper CI 0.57). Similarly, social support had significant direct paths to career satisfaction ($\beta = 0.18$; $p \leq 0.01$ – positive pathway; lower CI 0.09 , upper CI 0.27).

Emotional intelligence had a significant indirect effect on career satisfaction, as mediated through perceived organisational and social support ($\beta = 0.13$; $p \leq 0.01$; lower CI 0.08 , upper CI 0.18). The BC bootstrapping 95% CI did not include zero, suggesting a significant indirect (partial mediation) effect of perceived organisational and social support on the emotional intelligence and career satisfaction association. Table 2 and Figure 1 show that the results supported the following hypothesis:

H2: Perceived organisational support and social support mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence and career satisfaction.

Discussion

The study sought to investigate the indirect effect of emotional intelligence on career satisfaction through POS and social support. The findings from the first hypothesis revealed that emotional intelligence positively influenced the career satisfaction of professional women. Individuals with high emotional intelligence tend to be conversant at utilising and managing their emotions to achieve better workplace outcomes. Although women tend to be empathetic, they need varied emotional intelligence skillsets to network and interact with co-workers and service clients. For instance, self-awareness, being sociable, optimistic, resilience with

TABLE 2: Direct and indirect effects of emotional intelligence on career satisfaction through scale perceived organisational support and social support ($N = 606$).

Variable	Estimate	Standardised (estimate)	SE	CR	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	Bootstrapping BC 95% CI	
								Lower	Upper
AES → SPOS	0.48	0.17	0.12	4.158	**	0.17	0.03	0.09	0.26
AES → MSPSS	0.66	0.24	0.11	5.836	**	0.25	0.06	0.15	0.33
AES → CSS	0.07	0.03	0.08	0.799	0.439	0.55	0.30	-0.04	0.10
SPOS → CSS	0.42	0.51	0.03	14.438	*	-	-	0.44	0.57
MSPSS → CSS	0.15	0.18	0.03	4.957	**	-	-	0.09	0.27
Indirect effects of effect SPOS and MSPSS (Mediation effect)	-	0.13	0.06	-	**	-	-	0.08	0.18

SE, standard error; CR, critical ratio; BC, bias-corrected; CI, confidence interval; AES, Assessing Emotions Scale; CSS, Career Satisfaction Scale; MSPSS, Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support; SPOS, Scale Perceived Organisational Support.

*, $p \leq 0.05$; **, $p \leq 0.01$.

determination, persistence and strategic thinking are characteristics that determine success in the financial and engineering industry. In addition, emotionally intelligent people tend to be stronger internal motivators, have increased self-confidence and are able to improve the ability to focus on a goal, as well as create better networks of support to succeed (Hamid & Amir Ishak, 2019).

Consistent with the SET (Ahmad et al., 2023) and OST (Eisenberger et al., 2020), POS and social support operated as pathways between emotional intelligence and career satisfaction. Notably, the results yielded supportive evidence for the second hypothesis. The results indicate that while emotional intelligence does not directly predict career satisfaction, it significantly influences career satisfaction indirectly through both POS and social support. This suggests that individuals with higher emotional intelligence tend to perceive greater organisational support and stronger social support, which, in turn, leads to higher levels of career satisfaction. The findings advance the underlying mechanism through which emotional intelligence skills may lead to the enhancement of employees' career satisfaction through the POS and social support link.

The findings imply that emotional intelligence is likely to enhance the levels of career satisfaction through addressing POS and social support needs, and that different sources of support could function as important mechanisms in strengthening the link between emotional intelligence skills and career satisfaction (Sembiring et al., 2021). The findings are supported by Karatepe and Olugbade (2017) who suggested that work social support boosts career satisfaction. Likewise, Wickramaratne (2021) reported a positive association between POS and the subjective career success of supervisory-level managers. However, Maan et al. (2020) revealed that the relationship between POS and job satisfaction is weaker when employees' proactive personality is higher rather than lower.

Okoye et al. (2017) showed that emotional intelligence and social support significantly relate to entrepreneurial success. Accordingly, participants who perceived themselves to be emotionally intelligent (perception of emotions, managing own and others' emotions and utilisation of emotions) were inclined to experience high levels of perceived organisational and social support and, in turn, were likely to be satisfied with their careers. In addition, employees with high levels of emotional intelligence (understand and express emotions and use emotions in adaptive ways) (Schutte et al., 2009) were likely to perceive their organisations as valuing their contributions and caring about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 2020). Hence, the fact that employees can count on their families and significant others for supportive initiatives, in the form of emotional and instrumental support essential for the attainment of career goals, would likely increase experiences and/or perceptions of career satisfaction (Takawira, 2024).

Liu (2018) found that social support partially mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. Ali and Hamza (2018) also found that POS influences the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. Conversely, Azpiazu et al. (2023) pointed out that possibly paying too much attention to emotions may generate ruminative thoughts that hamper adaptive processes. In addition, the abovementioned authors suggested that different sources of support may impact various aspects of emotional intelligence capabilities because the effect of the support provided may vary in accordance with its source, nature and the extent to which it was adjusted to individual needs. Ultimately, the current study demonstrated the importance of supportive resources and emotionally intelligent capabilities in the achievement of career satisfaction among working women.

Practical implications

The results suggest that employees with higher levels of emotional intelligence are more likely to experience higher levels of POS and social support, which in turn result in higher levels of career satisfaction. Therefore, organisations should consider supportive interventions as core aspects of the career development practices aimed at enhancing the career satisfaction of working women. Career counsellors may advise women on how to gain an advantage by utilising their emotional intelligence capabilities to potentially contribute to their career development and progression aimed at enhancing their career satisfaction. In addition, career counsellors should assist working women in exploring the magnitude of their emotional intelligence capabilities with the aim of finding career development interventions that best suit their unique career needs. The current research has demonstrated that the inclusion of supportive resources can enhance a higher emotional intelligence skillset, which can contribute to career satisfaction.

Limitations and recommendations

Firstly, the data were collected through a survey self-reporting method that may be, to some extent, subjective in nature. Additionally, a major concern when conducting cross-sectional surveys relates to common method bias. In keeping with Podsakoff et al. (2012), the one-factor results for the utilised scales showed that common method variance did not pose a serious bias threat to the present research findings. However, multiple assessment methods to objectively measure the levels of the constructs, especially emotional intelligence, could be utilised. Secondly, there are insufficient cross-cultural inferences for the conclusions because most of the participants were white women. In future, the study could be repeated in multi-cultural professional bodies, with a more representative sample population of working women. Thirdly, the study is context specific, as it was conducted among working women, and it can be expanded to include men registered with the same professional bodies to determine the interaction of the

variables in a different context. Fourthly, the results of this study can only be applied to working women in this specific researched context setting. In future, scholars could conduct research in a sample population from different gender and multi-cultural settings, utilising other mediators likely to enhance the relationship dynamics between emotional intelligence and career satisfaction.

Conclusion

The main findings showed that the mediation analysis provided new insights into the ancillary function of supportive resources in the relationship dynamics between emotional intelligence and career satisfaction. Hence, higher levels of emotional intelligence likely should enhance career satisfaction through POS and social support initiatives. This outcome is relevant because supportive resources and emotional intelligence skills have proven necessary for integration, social adjustment and career advancement in the workplace. Therefore, the findings reported in the relationship dynamics between emotional intelligence and career satisfaction highlight the significance of supportive resources in contributing to the career advancement of working women.

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Competing interests

The author declares that she has no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced her in writing this article.

Author's contributions

N.T. wrote the literature review and conceptualised the research design, main findings, discussion, implications and conclusions of the study.

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Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, N.T., upon reasonable request.

Disclaimer

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