

## Investigating the Impact of Trait Emotional Intelligence (TEI) and Social Support on Work-Based Learning Students' Career Adaptability

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### Abstract

In this investigation, a mediation model was tested in which social support was the link between Trait Emotional Intelligence (TEI) and scholastic flexibility in the workplace. Previous studies have found a link between TEI and job flexibility in call center workers and college students, but the impact on WBL hotel management students has been understudied. To assess the impact of TEI on social support and career flexibility, a total of 86 Work-Based Learning (WBL) students in final year hotel management programme at a Malaysian polytechnic were surveyed. It is postulated that TEI would have a beneficial effect on both occupational flexibility and social networks. The role of social support in mediating the link between TEI and flexibility in the workplace was also investigated. To examine the connection between the variables, a regression analysis and a Sobel test were used. The finding showed TEI was associated with a more flexible work environment and a more encouraging social network. This research adds to the limited body of knowledge on TEI, social support, and career flexibility. More study is needed to fully grasp the connection between TEI and career adaptability in WBL students in other courses, and this research may utilize a different mediator variable.

**Keywords:** Trait Emotional Intelligence, Social Support, Career Adaptability, Work-Based Learning

### Introduction

Students in the WBL hotel management programme go through the programme for a total of eight months, which means that they are prepared to graduate fast and gain the work that they want basing on the prospect. Dealing with it requires solid career planning as well as the capacity to compete effectively in the working environment. Despite this, most of the

students did not go on to have successful careers after completing their WBL. They were not successful in obtaining the job chance that was presented by the company for which they had completed their WBL in the past. Both TEI and career adaptability are examples of self-regulating resources, which means that the excitement they provide may shift over time in response to the varying needs of managers. According to the findings of Buyken et al (2015), researchers have placed a greater emphasis on the role of emotional intelligence and career flexibility as crucial meta-competencies in allowing individuals to respond effectively to professional transitions and build professions that are sustainable. In addition, Ahmad (2013) asserted that Malaysian students are not equipped with the necessary "soft skills" and do not maintain an emotional equilibrium throughout or after their education. Lim (2019) said that approximately sixty percent of Malaysian graduates had poor attitudes, characters, personalities, and capacities to communicate with others. As a result, conducting TEI analyses on pupils, particularly during WBL, is of the utmost importance.

The students' TEI can have an impact on their career flexibility as well as the job opportunities available to them. According to Perera and McIlveen (2017), the student's personality characteristics such as openness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability, all of which are regarded to be indicators of career flexibility, should be taken into consideration. Managing one's emotions is responsible for most of the overall TEI and career adaptability diversity. This is due to the four career adaptability domains it encompasses: career concern, career control, career confidence, and career curiosity. According to the findings of Coetzee and Harry (2014), individuals need to cultivate their EI to enhance their career adaptability in the natural world. Because career adaptability is an important factor in the development of a college student's career and crucial during the pursuit of WBL, a student needs to be equipped with (4) adaptive resources (concern for one's career, control, curiosity, and confidence) to manage professional transitions and opportunities. Career adaptability is an important factor in the development of a college student's career, and crucial during the pursuit of WBL (Porfeli & Savickas, 2012). Adaptability in one's line of work can not only increase one's chances of finding a career that is both suited and wanted, but it can also help one succeed in the transition from education to the workforce (Koen et al., 2012).

There are a limited number of research that demonstrate the effect that TEI has on the flexibility of a profession. According to Parmentier et al (2019), interpretation of the data collected for their study, emotional intelligence was a predictor of career adaptability among adults who were enrolled in an adult education programme in the Educational Sciences. This finding is in line with the predictions made by the Career Construction Model (Savickas, 2005). Important meta-competencies that support adaptive behaviours, hence facilitating individuals' adaptation to job problems and individual well-being include emotional intelligence and career flexibility. Students' levels of TEI can have an effect, either positively or negatively, on their ability to adjust to changes in their chosen careers. However, research conducted by Almoayad and Ledger (2018) found that after completing an internship, some students experienced a loss of self-confidence regarding their potential future careers. As a result of an unanticipated internship, a student may lack the self-assurance to pursue a job related to their area of concentration. In this context, higher education institutions (HEIs) ought to consider the creation and implementation of WBL in order to evaluate the technical and occupational adaptability of their students. According to Di Fabio and Kenny (2014), the

influence of social support on TEI and career adaptability can come from a variety of sources. For example, teachers and students in schools can provide strong support and support for academics and advancement towards educational and career goals. Therefore, social support is thought to promote an individual's well-being since it benefits an individual's emotions, cognitions, and behaviours. This implies that students need to appreciate the importance of social support in enhancing their TEI as well as their adaptability to different professional paths.

### **Literature Review**

Work-Based Learning is one of the educational models that are being introduced into polytechnic institutions in Malaysia. WBL is a method of instruction and learning in which students are required to finish their industrial training while being supervised by their employers. It is a concept that refers to students who are working toward obtaining a diploma and who are interested in gaining work experience. It is beneficial to students as they try to choose a professional path since it eases the transition into the working world and teaches them how things are done there. At the beginning of 2007, the learning curriculum was integrated into the Malaysian school system. In the beginning, this programme was mostly offered at polytechnics and community colleges. The Polytechnic & Community College Education Department of Malaysia (JPPKK) was the entity responsible for the initiative, which was shortly followed by the incorporation of 11 other community colleges in February 2007 (Watisin et al., 2015). In spite of this, the WBL programme was moved to polytechnics in June of 2010 due to a wide range of challenges experienced at the previously mentioned schools (Watisin & Hashim, 2014).

WBL is a necessary part of the curriculum and should be finished in the final year of schooling. As a component of the diploma programme, it involves two (2) semesters. In addition, the Bachelor of Arts with Honours programmes offered by polytechnics make use of WBL, which differentiates them from the same programmes offered by other educational institutions. As of 2018, the polytechnic provides seven bachelor's degree programmes with honours and eight Diploma programmes, all of which follow the WBL curriculum. According to Ismail et al. (2021), numerous premier polytechnics are also participating in the early stages of WBL adoption in polytechnics. The polytechnics plan to expand their WBL implementation to other Malaysia polytechnics in the future, with 75% of courses offering the WBL mode (JPPKK, 2019).

Table 1

*Specification of the Structure of the Polytechnic WBL Study Programme*

| Item   | Specification   |           |                         |           |                          |           |  |           |
|--|---|-----------|-------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|-----------|--|-----------|
| <b>Contact Hours per Week (max)</b>            | <b>Diploma</b>  |           | <b>Advanced Diploma</b> |           | <b>Executive Diploma</b> |           | <b>Bachelor's Degree</b>                 |           |
|  | Polytec hnic  | Indus try | Polytec hnic            | Indus try | Polytec hnic             | Indus try | Polytec hnic                             | Indus try |
|  | 32  | 40        | 32                      | 40        | 16                       | 40        | 32                                       | 40        |
| <b>Compulsory Courses</b>                      | Refer to Program Standard   |           |                         |           |                          |           |  |           |
| <b>Core Courses</b>                            | Refer to Program Standard   |           |                         |           |                          |           |  |           |
| <b>Specific Courses</b>                        | 25%-30% total credit hours per programme  |           | None                    |           |                          |           | 25%-30% total credit hours per programme |           |
| <b>Elective Courses</b>                        | Refer to Program Standard   |           |                         |           | None                     |           | Refer to Program Standard                |           |
| <b>Percentage of Practical Tutorial</b>        | Minimum practical component is 40% and above (Involving core, specific and elective courses only)   |           |                         |           |                          |           |  |           |
| <b>Maximum no. of semester and study weeks</b> | Maximum number of semesters – 3 semesters a year<br>Maximum number of study weeks = 43 weeks a year |           |                         |           |                          |           |  |           |

Source: Adapted from Buku Panduan Pelaksanaan Program Pengajian Pendekatan Work-Based Learning Politeknik Malaysia, (JPPKK, 2019).

The WBL at polytechnics is a learning process that takes place in a given industry over a specified period of time, as outlined in the study programme structure. It includes a number of core courses pertinent to the study programme's topic of study, as well as specifics regarding the workload for each course. The utilization of WBL in Malaysian polytechnics differs depending on the educational curriculum. There is no standardized method for establishing WBL study programmes at polytechnics, or, to put it another way, there is no "one-size-fits-all" model to which each course must conform (JPPKK, 2019). WBL is defined by Bezerra et al. (2022) as learning while working, learning for work, or learning on the job.

As an integral aspect of professional education, the work and its surroundings serve as a curriculum, a "case," and a learning process for the training of individuals and/or working adults. When students work in industry, assessment scores are used to determine whether or not they have attained learning objectives. According to JPPKK (2019), a variety of assessment methods may be used to evaluate students so long as the learning objectives fit with the Malaysia Qualification Agency's (MQA) 2016 five clusters. According to Jabatan Pelancongan & Hospitaliti (2016), the assessments for the hotel management course comprise a corporate evaluation, an interview, a reflective journal, and a presentation.

### **Trait Emotional Intelligence (TEI)**

The growing importance of technical and emotional intelligence (TEI) in corporate hiring has encouraged psychologists, researchers, and educators to rethink their conventional notions of intelligence and to study techniques for testing and evaluating TEI (Petrides et al., 2016). Emotional Intelligence (EI) is a term that refers to a person's capacity to understand and manage their own emotions and the emotions of others (Parmentier et al., 2019). As a direct consequence of this, a number of EI domains have been rediscovered and categorised, which has sparked a great deal of debate and controversy. Serrat (2017) described emotional intelligence as a component of social intelligence that entails the capacity to monitor one's own and others' moods and emotions, distinguish between them, and use this information to influence one's thinking and behaviour. They also defined EI as a component of social intelligence that entails the capacity to empathise with others. It is worthy of commendation because the book argues that EI has huge benefits for social ties, career achievement, and health. As a result, there are two separate kinds of EI that can be clustered together: trait-based and ability-based EI. The ability-based paradigm of emotional intelligence (EI) refers to a collection of skills that enable individuals to identify, utilise, interpret, and manage their feelings (Serrat, 2017).

Mayer and Salovey (1997) proposed a four-branch model of ability-based EI, which includes the following: (1) the ability to generate, use, and feel emotions in order to communicate feelings or to use them in other mental processes (emotional facilitation); (2) the ability to perceive emotions in oneself and others, as well as in objects, art, and stories (emotional perception); and (3) the ability to generate, use, and feel emotions in order to communicate feelings or to use them in other mental processes. Evaluations of emotional intelligence based on traits consider a wide range of features, abilities, and personal characteristics. These characteristics include self-confidence, perseverance, and conscientiousness. According to Petrides et al. (2016), TEI is connected to behavioural preferences and self-perceived talents, and study ought to be carried out primarily within the context of a person's personality. On the other hand, the ability EI ought to be investigated largely in terms of one's psychological intelligence, given that intellectual capacity and personality are, for the most part, independent spheres. Because of this, the study accepts a broader definition of the components that make up TEI, and as a result, it places a primary emphasis on aspects of TEI that pertain to well-being, self-control, emotionality, and sociability.

### **Social Support**

An interaction that constitutes social support is defined as an interpersonal transaction that comprises emotional attention, instrumental help, knowledge, or assessment (Oztemel and Akyol, 2019). Social support has the potential to be a substantial source of socialization and

it is considered as a coping method at work and even in the domestic sphere (Saks & Gruman, 2011). Karatepe and Olugbade (2016) emphasized social support as a technique of avoiding emotional weariness. They argued that individuals are able to explore varied professional roles and manage career changes when they are in an atmosphere that is supportive of their endeavours. Lee et al (2021) highlighted that social work support is an essential part of the social support system that is present in the workplace. According to Karatepe and Olugbade (2016), a work environment that supports social support for individuals who are trying to change their employment positions and who are attempting to manage career transitions is beneficial for those individuals. In addition, having access to social support in the workplace appears to be an important employment resource that assists people in adjusting to their occupations. Oztemel and Akyol (2019) suggest that social support comprises various forms of assistance from one's surroundings. These forms of assistance include things like monetary assistance, support in the form of information, assistance in the form of physical assistance, and other forms of assistance that help a person realize that they are loved, appreciated, and cared for, particularly in times of difficulty. The ability of an individual to overcome challenges in the workplace can be improved by receiving social support, which also has a beneficial impact on the growth of adaptation in the workplace (Ebenehi et al., 2016). In order to boost TEI and improve the efficiency of career adaptation, it is crucial to determine the aspects of social support that students perceive to be the most important.

### **Career Adaptability**

Career adaptability is described as the ability of individuals to deal with their professional lives (Zacher, 2014). The ability of a person to transition easily to new job responsibilities remains resilient in the face of unforeseen shifts in career goals and benefits from future improvements in their field (Johnston, 2018). Adaptability to careers is comprised of four components: preparation for future jobs (concern), responsibility for the development of businesses (control), the identification of persons and their potential career opportunities (curiosity), and their belief in the ability to resolve career issues (confidence) (Porfeli & Savickas, 2012). Concern refers to preparation for future jobs; control refers to responsibility for the development of businesses; curiosity refers to identifying persons and their potential (2012). These resources are control, worry, curiosity, and confidence. In this context, "control" refers to the feeling of being in charge of one's own future professional path. The term "concern" refers to the aspiration to get oneself ready for upcoming professional responsibilities. The desire to learn more about oneself and one's surroundings in order to make more informed choices about one's professional life in the future is an example of curiosity. In conclusion, confidence can be defined as the conviction that one will successfully overcome difficulties encountered in one's professional life in the future.

An individual's capacity to adjust to a change in job is what is meant by the term "career adaptability," which was used by (Duffy et al., 2015). In addition, Hlado et al (2019) state that when a problem arises at work, individuals may become increasingly interested in their future career. This interest may manifest itself in a variety of ways, including taking charge of their training or self-reflection, investigating prospects, and researching the many potential future scenarios. The adaptability of a person's career is reflected in their capacity to adjust to the responsibilities and demands of the workplace, and this ability is directly related to the connection that exists between the individual and their place of employment (Zacher, 2014). According to the findings of the research, those who are flexible when it

comes to their professions have a greater chance of succeeding in a variety of work environments.

### **Relationship between TEI, Social Support and Career Adaptability**

Mittal (2020) indicates that students with a high level of emotional intelligence (EI) and who are proactive are more involved in career-related research, career adaptability, and job search success. Petrides et al (2016) discovered that individuals with strong EI abilities are more likely to acquire career-decision self-efficacy because the career confidence component of career adaptability is comparable to career-decision self-efficacy; this provides indirect evidence that EI is associated with career confidence. Moreover, Di Fabio and Kenny (2015) acknowledged EI and social support in life-planning and workplace development as strategies of increasing tenacity, persistence, and self-efficacy (Porfeli & Savickas, 2012). Positively framed social and emotional competencies, such as EI and access to social support for juvenile development, are also acknowledged as essential individual and contextual assets for adaptive treatment (Mittal, 2020). Johnston (2018) found that the behavioral fields of career adaptation facilitate the transformation of individual characteristics into effective professional problem-solving and management strategies. According to Coetzee and Harry (2014), a healthy EI provides for vitality, self-regulation expertise, and the willingness to display good professional adaptability, namely the willingness to plan one's future and how career goals are to be attained. The following hypotheses were therefore proposed:

H<sub>1</sub>: TEI positively influences career adaptability.

H<sub>2</sub>: TEI positively influences social support.

H<sub>3</sub>: Social support positively influences career adaptability.

H<sub>4</sub>: Social support mediates the relationship between TEI and career adaptability.

### **Methodology**

This was a descriptive study with a causative component that investigated the relationship between TEI, social support, and career adaptability. TEI is comprised of well-being, self-control, emotionality, and sociability. Given that the goal of this study is to examine the relationship between TEI, social support, and career adaptability among WBL hotel management students at the polytechnic, a quantitative approach employing a cross-sectional survey is the most suitable methodology to employ. This study utilized a single data collection device. Utilizing a questionnaire, the quantitative methodology was implemented. Three tests formed the basis of the questionnaire which uses 7-points Likert scale. Using the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue) exam, the EI trait was evaluated. The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) was used to evaluate social support, whereas the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS) was utilized to evaluate career adaptability. In addition, a causal analysis is employed to establish whether one variable effect the change of another (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

As the subject of the study, a polytechnic offering a Hotel Management Diploma was chosen. Only four of the thirty-six polytechnics offer a Diploma in Hotel Management. The total sample population numbers are 106, with participation limited to final year students. The sample was chosen because they had already completed one semester of WBL in the hotel business and their TEI, social support, and career adaptability are pertinent to evaluate.

Individuals are the unit of analysis for this study; each student who attends WBL in the industry represents one entity, and the responses are also analysed individually. In this study, the sample size typical of WBL hotel management students was 86. The survey questionnaires were adapted from TEIQue-SF: Petrides et al (2016), MSPSS, (Zimet et al., 1988), and CAAS (Porfeli & Savickas, 2012).

### Findings

The goodness measures for all the variables in the study have no item has been deleted for all the variables. All TEI sub-dimensions, social support, and career adaptability maintain excellent reliability levels since Cronbach's Alpha values were above 0.80. Hence all items could be considered valid and reliable for measurement. TEI mean scores on the 7-point Likert scale exceeded "3". The average mean score, ranging from 3.02 to 5.50, refers to students who moderately agreed to the questions asked on TEI, social support, and career adaptability.

Table 2

#### *Reliability Coefficient for Study Variables*

| Questionnaire                      | No. of Items | Cronbach's Alpha |
|------------------------------------|--------------|------------------|
| Trait Emotional Intelligence (TEI) | 30           | .863             |
| Social Support                     | 8            | .842             |
| Career Adaptability                | 24           | .936             |

Note: N= 86

A multiple regression analysis investigated the influence of TEI subdimension on student career adaptability. Table 3 indicates that all of the TEI subdimension ( $B = 0.441$ ,  $p < .01$ ) had a positive significant effect on career adaptability. The four TEI factors were entered as predictors to predict career adaptability as the dependent variables. The results are shown in Table 3 below. The standardized coefficients demonstrate Well-being as the strongest unique contribution ( $0.272$ ,  $p < 0.00$ ), followed by Self-control ( $0.219$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and Sociability ( $0.087$ ,  $p < 0.02$ ) in predicting student career adaptability. The TEI models designed by Petrides et al (2016) are also supported by this study and the findings on the TEI model are also similar to that found by (Coetzee and Henry, 2014).

Table 3

#### *Multiple Regression with four TEI Factors as Predictors of Career Adaptability*

| Career adaptability | TEI          | $\beta$ | SE   | t      | p      | Adj. R square |
|---------------------|--------------|---------|------|--------|--------|---------------|
|                     | Well-being   | .272    | .082 | 1.950  | 0.00** | .127          |
|                     | Self-control | .219    | .087 | 1.493  | 0.01*  |               |
|                     | Emotionality | -.152   | .081 | -1.130 | 0.46   |               |
|                     | Sociability  | .087    | .077 | .739   |        |               |
|                     |              |         |      |        | 0.02*  |               |

Note: N=86; Dependent Variable = career adaptability; \*\* $p < .001$ ; \* $p < .01$ .

The results are shown in Table 4 the standardized coefficient demonstrate self-control as the strongest unique contribution ( $0.22$ ,  $p < 0.00$ ), followed by sociability ( $0.219$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and well-being ( $0.062$ ,  $p < 0.03$ ) in predicting student social support. Some of the research



hypotheses are supported by the above findings; TEI and social support are related, and an increase in one is likely to lead an increase in the other (Di Fabio & Kenny, 2015). Proportionally, however, despite the fact that a relationship was established for all variables, the current study did not find all (4) TEI dimensions significant. The (3) dimensions that have statistically contributed to student social support are self-control, sociability, and well-being. The strongest dimension is self-control, which includes attributes such as knowing how to regulate their own emotions and dealing with stress.

The second strongest dimension is sociability, which refers to the student's ability to deal with others as well as their ability to negotiate and influence others. Well-being, which refers to the student's feeling self-assured, content, and enthusiastic has the least impact on social support. However, unlike the (3) other TEI dimensions, emotionality has an insignificant impact on social support too, although it does have a positive correlation. This is most likely due to the students' inability to express their emotions to their own families and friend, making gaining support from them difficult.

Table 4

*Multiple Regression with four TEI Factors as Predictors of Social Support*

| Social Support | TEI          | $\beta$ | SE   | t     | p      | Adj. R square |
|----------------|--------------|---------|------|-------|--------|---------------|
|                | Well-being   | .062    | .191 | .427  | 0.03** | .108          |
|                | Self-control | .221    | .203 | 1.451 | 0.00** |               |
|                | Emotionality | -.064   | .189 | -.458 | 0.24   |               |
|                | Sociability  | .152    | .180 | 1.245 | 0.01*  |               |

Note: N=86; Dependent Variable = career adaptability; \*\* $p < .001$ ; \* $p < .01$ .

As shown in the following Table 5, social support illustrated that 16.7 percent ( $R^2 = .157$ ,  $F = 16.816$ ,  $p < .001$ ) of the variance in the career adaptability. The result for Beta coefficient value ( $\beta = .408$ ,  $p < .001$ ) produced by social support shows that career adaptability is influenced by the social support from the WBL students in this study. As mentioned in the table, social support positively and significantly influenced career adaptability. Therefore, the hypothesis is strongly supported.

Table 5

*Results of Linear Regression of Social Support and Career Adaptability*

| Predictors     | Model 1<br>Std. $\beta$ |
|----------------|-------------------------|
| Social Support | .408                    |
| $R^2$          | .167                    |
| Adjusted $R^2$ | .157                    |
| F              | 16.816                  |

Note: \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

Sobel test was utilized to examine if social support mediated the relationship between TEI and career adaptability. First, results of simple linear regression show that TEI was a statistically significant predictor of career adaptability ( $b = .277$ ,  $\beta = .078$ ,  $t = 3.537$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Next, when the mediator, social support, was entered in the regression analysis, TEI still a significant predictor of career adaptability ( $b = .217$ ,  $\beta = .283$ ,  $t = 2.885$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

Furthermore, the mediator, social support, also emerged as a significant predictor of career adaptability ( $b = .154$ ,  $\beta = .345$ ,  $t = 3.521$ ,  $p < .001$ ). To further investigate the mediator, the Sobel test was utilized to examine if social support significantly mediated the relationship between TEI and career adaptability. The results confirmed that social support is not significantly mediate the relationship between TEI and career adaptability ( $Z = 1.802$ ,  $p > 0.01$ ). Because of the computed z score (1.802) falls outside the z critical values of  $\pm 2.58$ , which indicates a statistically significant result at alpha .01.

Table 6

*Summary of Hypotheses Testing*

| Hypotheses  | Result    |
|---|-----------|
| H <sub>1</sub> <b>TEI positively influences career adaptability.</b>                                | Supported |
| H <sub>1a</sub> Well-being positively influences career adaptability.                               | Supported |
| H <sub>1b</sub> Self-control positively influences career adaptability.                             | Supported |
| H <sub>1c</sub> Emotionality positively influences career adaptability.                             | Rejected  |
| H <sub>1d</sub> Sociability positively influences career adaptability.                              | Supported |
| H <sub>2</sub> <b>TEI positively influences social support.</b>                                     | Supported |
| H <sub>2a</sub> Well-being positively influences social support.                                    | Supported |
| H <sub>2b</sub> Self-control positively influences social support.                                  | Supported |
| H <sub>2c</sub> Emotionality positively influences social support.                                  | Rejected  |
| H <sub>2d</sub> Sociability positively influences social support.                                   | Supported |
| H <sub>3</sub> <b>Social support positively influences career adaptability.</b>                     | Supported |
| H <sub>4</sub> <b>Social support mediates the relationship between TEI and career adaptability.</b> | Rejected  |

**Discussion & Conclusion**

The study found a favourable correlation between TEI and career flexibility, which was consistent with the study's hypotheses. However, the effect was somewhat significant, showing that TEI had a moderately substantial impact on students' job adaptability during WBL. These results corroborate my theory that TEI provides individuals with resources to assist them in overcoming career obstacles, as seen by their career adaptability. Except for emotionality, three of the TEI subfactors (well-being, sociability, and self-control) positively influence students' career adaptability. The study found that the students believed they should be able to "step into someone else's shoes" and experience their feelings, but they were unable to do so. It is acceptable to conclude that the students must experience the emotions of their guests and strive to serve them better. During interactions with guests and co-workers, they frequently pause to reflect on their emotions. Examining the TEI dimensions, this study demonstrates that a high level of sociability, emotionality, well-being, and self-control equips individuals with a set of several competencies to face career challenges and adaptability, where perceived social support is likely to play an important but not essential role, as suggested by the research results.

Nonetheless, not all TEI aspects have favourably impacted social support. Emotionality had a detrimental effect on social support. According to Petrides et al (2016), emotionality comprises (personal and interpersonal) emotion perception, emotion expression, relationships, and trait empathy. If kids lack any of the aforementioned, it may damage their

emotional well-being. Emotion perception refers to the biological and physiological processes involved in recognising and identifying emotions in oneself and in others. Some students were aware of the social assistance they received from their family and friends, according to the research. This is significant because it demonstrates that they have someone with whom they can discuss their everyday activities while performing their WBL in the sector. In addition, while they are transitioning from student to hotel worker, they acknowledge that their family is eager to assist them in making judgments. This will also impair their adaptability in the workplace. However, the results showed that social support did not buffer the association between TEI and the occupational adaptability of WBL students. This demonstrated that whether or not students receive social support has no bearing on their TEI and professional flexibility. According to the findings of this study, social support is not a significant predictor of career flexibility among WBL students.

The study shows that TEI is prevalent among WBL hotel management students, but emotionality remains a challenge that negatively affects career adaptability and social support. Given the paucity of research on TEI and career adaptability among WBL students, this study contributed vital new insights that may alter career development interventions for students in polytechnic, particularly those in WBL mode. In addition, boosting the TEI of WBL students throughout their time at the polytechnic prior to embarking on their professional experience through WBL can improve their career flexibility. It is recommended that students attend courses, programmes, or new modules during their polytechnic studies that can assist them in identifying their personal strengths in terms of work-related psychosocial factors (e.g., emotional intelligence and career flexibility). In the prior study, social support served as a mediator; however, these investigations focused mostly on high school students in general education or university students. Little is known about the importance of social support in the transition from school to employment for vocational students. Consequently, students frequently struggle to go smoothly along their chosen job route and could benefit from social support. Future studies must therefore continue to examine social support in relation to WBL students. This study also highlights the necessity to address issues in career adaptation in student education settings. As suggested by the researcher, enrolling in an education programme is a transition in and of itself, and people are especially likely to rely on their TEI to deal with new learning problems and succeed in their training while balancing the multiple responsibilities of worker and student, despite family obligations.

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