

Emotional Intelligence as a Catalyst for Resilient and Sustainable Construction Project Management in South Africa

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Abstract

The South African construction industry faces a dual challenge: the urgent need for sustainable built environments and the persistent complexity of socio-economic project volatility. While technical proficiency is well-documented, a significant knowledge gap exists regarding the specific behavioural drivers, such as Emotional Intelligence (EI), that enable Construction Project Managers (CPMs) to navigate these unique regional pressures. This study aims to evaluate the level of EI among CPMs and determine its role as a precursor to resilient project delivery. Specifically, the research objectives were to quantify current EI competencies and identify how these attributes underpin collaborative, sustainable outcomes. Guided by a positivist paradigm, the study employed a quantitative design using a structured, closed-ended questionnaire. A purposive sampling strategy targeted CPMs within the Durban metropolitan area. Of the 35 questionnaires distributed, 21 valid responses were received (60% response rate). Data were analysed using SPSS version 30 through descriptive statistical techniques. Findings suggest EI acts as a catalyst, providing the emotional infrastructure necessary to support the technical infrastructure. However, the study acknowledges the small sample size as a primary limitation; while the results provide a valuable localised snapshot, the findings lack broad generalisability. Consequently, the analysis and conclusions are presented as an exploratory foundation for larger-scale regional studies. The study concludes that integrating EI development into professional curricula and organisational strategy is essential for achieving the aim of a more resilient industry. By bridging the gap between "soft" leadership skills and "hard" sustainable outcomes, this research advances our understanding of the human-centric drivers necessary for the evolution of the South African built environment.

Keywords: construction, emotional intelligence, project managers, resilience, sustainable construction.

1. Introduction

The construction industry is widely recognised as one of the most complex and people-intensive sectors within the built environment, requiring project managers to operate in dynamic, uncertain, and multidisciplinary contexts (Aghimien & Aigbavboa, 2024; Watermeyer & Phillips, 2020). In South Africa, these demands are amplified by socio-economic pressures, regulatory shifts, and the growing imperative to deliver projects that are not only cost-effective and timely but also resilient and sustainable (Van der Waldt, 2024). Consequently, the role of the construction project manager (CPM) has evolved beyond technical and contractual proficiency to encompass broader leadership capabilities that enable effective navigation of human and organisational complexities.

Within this evolving landscape, emotional intelligence (EI) has emerged as a critical leadership competency. Defined as the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and manage one's own emotions and those of others (Goleman, 1995), EI is increasingly linked to improved interpersonal relationships, communication, conflict resolution, and decision-making in project

environments (Harinarain, 2025). These capabilities are particularly relevant in construction, where projects are characterised by diverse stakeholder groups, competing interests, and high-pressure interactions (Zhang & Hao, 2022). Empirical studies indicate that emotionally intelligent leadership enhances team cohesion, collaboration, and overall project performance (Zhang & Hao, 2022).

The relevance of EI is further heightened within the South African construction context. The industry continues to face persistent challenges, including skills shortages, labour instability, project delays, and safety concerns, alongside increasing expectations for sustainable construction practices (Harinarain, 2025; Van der Waldt, 2024). These conditions require CPMs to demonstrate resilience, adaptability, and empathy in managing project teams and stakeholder relationships.

Despite growing international recognition of emotional intelligence (EI) in project management, empirical research focusing specifically on its role among construction project managers (CPMs) in South Africa remains limited. Existing studies in the local context are relatively sparse and tend to be exploratory or narrowly focused, highlighting a broader lack of empirical

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evidence on EI within the construction sector (Aghimien & Aigbavboa, 2024; Harinarain, 2025). Furthermore, the dominant body of construction management literature in South Africa continues to prioritise technical competencies, procurement systems, and project controls, with comparatively less attention given to behavioural and emotional capabilities that underpin effective and resilient leadership (Aghimien & Aigbavboa, 2024; Smallwood et al., 2014).

Against this backdrop, this study investigates the level and perceived importance of emotional intelligence among construction project managers in Durban, South Africa. Adopting a quantitative approach, the research examines how EI manifests in practice and explores its potential contribution to key project outcomes, including productivity, stakeholder engagement, job satisfaction, and sustainable project delivery. By positioning emotional intelligence as a catalyst for resilient and sustainable construction project management, the study contributes to a more integrated understanding of how soft leadership competencies can influence hard project outcomes in the South African built environment.

2. Emotional Intelligence and Project Management

Originally conceptualised by Salovey and Mayer (1990), EI refers to the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and utilise emotions to guide cognition and behaviour. Subsequent work by Goleman (1995) expanded the construct into leadership domains, positioning EI as a critical determinant of effective leadership performance.

Within project management, EI is increasingly recognised as a core competency that complements technical expertise. Project environments are inherently temporary, multidisciplinary, and often constrained by time, cost, and stakeholder pressures (Kerzner, 2022). These conditions demand that project managers navigate conflict, motivate diverse teams, and maintain stakeholder trust under pressure (Livesey, 2017). Empirical studies Rezvani et al. (2016) and Zhang & Hao (2022) consistently demonstrate that emotionally intelligent project managers exhibit stronger communication, improved conflict resolution, and enhanced team cohesion, all of which contribute to improved project outcomes.

In the construction industry, the relevance of EI is further amplified by its fragmented, stakeholder-intensive nature. Construction project managers (CPMs) must coordinate across professional boundaries, including architects, engineers, contractors, and clients, often in high-risk, high-pressure environments (Kerzner, 2022). As such, leadership effectiveness is not solely dependent on

technical competence but also on the ability to manage interpersonal dynamics. Evidence suggests that EI significantly influences team effectiveness, collaboration, and overall project performance in construction settings (Aghimien & Aigbavboa, 2024; Zhang & Hao, 2022).

2.1. Emotional Intelligence, Resilience, and Sustainability in South Africa

Resilience has emerged as a critical concept within the built environment, traditionally associated with the capacity of infrastructure systems to withstand and recover from disruptions. However, contemporary scholarship increasingly frames resilience as a socio-technical construct that incorporates both system capabilities and human factors (Mahmud, 2017). In project contexts, resilience refers to the ability of individuals and teams to adapt, recover, and maintain performance under conditions of stress and uncertainty (Khosravi, et al., 2020).

The South African construction sector operates in a uniquely complex environment, shaped by socio-economic inequality, regulatory transformation, and industry-specific challenges such as labour unrest, skills shortages, and site disruptions (Watermeyer & Phillips, 2020). Additionally, policy imperatives, such as the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE), require inclusive stakeholder engagement and socially responsive project delivery. These conditions necessitate leadership approaches that are both adaptive and relational. In such environments, leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping team resilience. Emotionally intelligent leaders are better equipped to regulate stress, respond constructively to conflict, and sustain team morale during periods of uncertainty ((Khosravi, et al., 2020). These capabilities enable project teams to maintain functional performance despite adverse conditions.

The relationship between EI and resilience is well established in the literature. EI enhances adaptive decision-making, emotional regulation, and relational trust, all of which are essential for resilient performance (Jordan & Troth, 2011). In construction, this linkage is particularly significant, as emotionally intelligent CPMs are more likely to demonstrate transformational leadership behaviours that foster team adaptability and long-term project sustainability (Mahmud, 2017). Accordingly, EI can be conceptualised as a human-centred resilience capability that supports both project continuity and sustainable outcomes.

Sustainability within this context extends beyond environmental considerations to include social and economic dimensions, often framed as the triple bottom line (Aghimien & Aigbavboa, 2024). However, the implementation of sustainable practices is frequently undermined by project instability and human conflict. EI plays a catalytic role in addressing these challenges

by enabling CPMs to foster collaboration, manage diverse stakeholder expectations, and maintain commitment to long-term project goals (Zhang & Hao, 2022).

Smallwood et al. (2014) and Sunindijo & Zou (2013) have also demonstrated that EI contributes to improved health and safety performance, a key dimension of social sustainability in construction. Project managers with higher EI are more effective in communicating safety protocols and cultivating a positive safety climate, thereby reducing accidents and enhancing workforce wellbeing (Sunindijo & Zou, 2013). In this sense, EI not only supports project performance but also underpins broader sustainability objectives.

By applying the WLEIS, this study moves beyond the general "soft skills" discourse and identifies exactly which emotional competencies enable CPMs to navigate the "construction mafia" and labour instability while maintaining a commitment to sustainable project delivery (Phakoana & Harinarain, 2025).

The intersection of emotional intelligence (EI), resilience, and sustainability within the South African construction sector represents a critical socio-technical nexus (Aghimien & Aigbavboa, 2024). This linkage is particularly significant, as emotionally intelligent CPMs are more likely to demonstrate transformational leadership behaviours that foster team adaptability and long-term project sustainability (Harinarain, 2025). Accordingly, EI can be conceptualised as a human-centred resilience capability that supports both project continuity and sustainable outcomes.

2.2. The Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS)

Emotional intelligence has been conceptualised through several theoretical perspectives. Salovey and Mayer (1990) originally proposed EI as an ability involving the perception, understanding, and management of emotions. This work subsequently evolved into the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence framework, which conceptualises EI as a set of cognitive-emotional abilities that can be objectively assessed (Mayer et al., 2004). In contrast, Bar-On (1997) views emotional intelligence as a broader emotional-social competency encompassing interpersonal skills, adaptability, stress management, and general well-being. While these frameworks have contributed significantly to the development of EI theory, the present study adopts the perspective operationalised through the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) (Wong & Law, 2002). The WLEIS is grounded in the ability-based conceptualisation of EI and has been widely validated across cultural and professional contexts. It comprises four dimensions: Self-Emotion Appraisal (SEA), Others' Emotion Appraisal (OEA), Use of Emotion (UOE), and Regulation of Emotion (ROE).

The WLEIS is particularly suited to project-based environments due to its focus on how individuals perceive and utilise emotions to enhance performance and social interaction. In construction management, these dimensions can be directly linked to leadership effectiveness:

- **Self-Emotion Appraisal (SEA):** This refers to the CPM's ability to understand their deep emotions and express them naturally. In the volatile South African market, a CPM's ability to recognise their own stress triggers is the first step toward maintaining leadership stability (Watermeyer & Phillips, 2020).
- **Others' Emotion Appraisal (OEA):** This ability to perceive and understand the emotions of those around them is vital for managing diverse project teams and community stakeholders. High OEA allows CPMs to anticipate resistance or conflict before it escalates (Wong & Law, 2002).
- **Use of Emotion (UOE):** This involves directing emotions toward constructive activities and personal performance. For CPMs, UOE is a catalyst for resilience, enabling them to remain motivated and "bounce back" from systemic shocks, such as site disruptions or budget overruns (Zhang & Hao, 2022).
- **Regulation of Emotion (ROE):** This is the ability to regulate one's emotions to enable a more rapid recovery from psychological distress. ROE is arguably the most critical dimension for sustainability, as it prevents impulsive decision-making under pressure and ensures that long-term environmental and ethical goals are not sacrificed for short-term project gains.

These dimensions collectively provide a robust framework for understanding how emotional capabilities influence leadership behaviour and project outcomes. In high-risk environments such as construction, ROE and UOE are particularly critical, as they enable CPMs to maintain composure and motivation during disruptions, thereby supporting both resilience and sustainability objectives.

2.3. Knowledge Gap and Conceptual Positioning

Despite the growing international literature on EI in project management, there remains a limited empirical understanding of how these competencies manifest in the South African construction context. Professional frameworks, such as those of the South African Council for the Project and Construction Management Professions (SACPCMP), have historically prioritised technical competencies, with less emphasis on behavioural capabilities.

By integrating the WLEIS framework with resilience theory, this research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of leadership in the built environment. It

reframes resilience not only as a technical attribute of systems but also as a human capability rooted in emotional intelligence, thereby aligning with broader calls for more holistic and human-centred approaches to construction project management.

Furthermore, while the WLEIS has been widely applied in organisational research, its use within construction project management in South Africa remains limited. There is a lack of quantitative evidence on the emotional intelligence profiles of CPMs, particularly regarding resilience and sustainable project delivery. This study addresses this gap by advancing the argument that emotionally intelligent CPMs are better equipped to foster communication, manage conflict, sustain team cohesion, and build stakeholder trust. In doing so, EI serves as a catalyst that translates technical project plans into effective, sustainable execution.

3. Research Methodology

This study was underpinned by a positivist research paradigm (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Given the study's objective of assessing the level and perceived importance of emotional intelligence among construction project managers, a quantitative research approach was considered most suitable. This approach enabled the researcher to collect standardised data and identify measurable patterns related to emotional intelligence within the selected professional cohort. Consequently, a deductive approach was adopted, testing the theoretical constructs of the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) (Wong & Law, 2002) using a structured, closed-ended questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument. The WLEIS is a validated emotional intelligence instrument that measures four dimensions of emotional intelligence, namely self-emotion appraisal, others' emotion appraisal, use of emotion, and regulation of emotion. The use of an established instrument enhanced the content validity and reliability of the study.

The target population comprised construction project managers operating within the Durban metropolitan area. A purposive sampling strategy was employed to identify respondents with relevant professional experience and practical exposure to construction project management processes. A total of 35 questionnaires were distributed to eligible respondents. Of these, 21 valid questionnaires were returned, resulting in a 60% response rate. This response rate was considered adequate for exploratory quantitative analysis within the scope of this paper.

The completed questionnaires were coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 30. Descriptive statistical techniques were employed, including frequencies, percentages, mean scores, standard deviations, and ranking analysis. These techniques were used to summarise respondents'

perceptions and identify patterns across the emotional intelligence dimensions measured in the study. Given the exploratory nature of the research and the relatively small sample size, the analysis was limited to descriptive statistics. No inferential statistical tests were conducted to establish causal or correlational relationships between variables.

Ethical integrity was maintained throughout the research process, and ethical clearance was obtained from the University's Research Ethics Committee prior to data collection. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were provided with an informed consent letter outlining the study's purpose. These measures were implemented in line with standard ethical practices in social research (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

A significant limitation of this study is the small sample size. Although 35 questionnaires were distributed, only 21 valid responses were received. While this rate is acceptable for exploratory research in the built environment, the small value limits the ability to perform complex inferential statistics. It reduces the generalisability of the findings to the broader South African CPM population. Consequently, these findings are presented as a localised study, providing a foundational evidence base for the Durban region rather than a definitive national profile.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Demographic Information

The demographic profile of the participants provides essential context for the emotional intelligence (EI) scores, as factors such as age, experience, and education often influence the development of self-regulation and social skills (Wong & Law, 2002). The majority of respondents (57%) fell within the 36–50 age category, suggesting a mid-career professional cohort. Participants aged 25–35 accounted for 29%, while those aged 50+ accounted for 14%. In terms of gender, the sample remained heavily male-dominated (76%), reflecting the persistent gender disparity in South African technical and management roles in construction (Aghimien & Aigbavboa, 2024).

The sample reflected a high level of institutional memory and industry experience, with 48% of respondents having over 10 years of experience in construction project management, and 33% having 5–10 years. Only 19% were considered junior CPMs with less than 5 years of experience.

The respondents' educational level was notably high, aligning with the professional registration requirements of the SACPCMP: 52% held a postgraduate degree (Honours/Masters/PhD), 38% a degree or B-Tech, and 10% a National Diploma. The high prevalence of postgraduate qualifications suggests a cohort likely

exposed to theoretical management frameworks; however, as the literature review indicated, there remains a gap in the formal integration of psychometric training, such as the WLEIS dimensions, within these technical curricula (Table 1).

Others' Emotion Appraisal (OEA) recorded a moderate-to-high mean ($M=3.85$). While positive, the lower score compared to SEA suggests a potential developmental gap in accurately perceiving the underlying emotional states of diverse project

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	16	76%
	Female	5	24%
Age	25–35	6	29%
	36–50	12	57%
	51+	3	14%
Experience	< 5 Years	4	19%
	5–10 Years	7	33%
	> 10 Years	10	48%
Qualification	Diploma	2	10%
	Degree/B-Tech	8	38%
	Postgraduate	11	52%

4.2. WLEIS Results and Analysis

The analysis of the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) provides an empirical baseline for the emotional competencies of the sampled construction project managers. The results are categorised into the four constituent dimensions of the scale.

4.2.1. Analysis of EI Dimensions

As illustrated in Table 2, the respondents demonstrated a relatively high overall level of Emotional Intelligence, though there are specific differences between "internal" appraisal and "external" regulation.

stakeholders. Given the socio-political complexity of South African construction sites, improving OEA is critical for mitigating conflict with local business forums and labour groups (Watermeyer & Phillips, 2020).

The Regulation of Emotion (ROE) dimension yielded the lowest mean score ($M=3.62$) and the highest standard deviation. This variation suggests that while many CPMs are self-aware, they struggle more significantly with the actual regulation of their emotions under duress. This is a critical finding: if a CPM cannot regulate distress during a "construction mafia" site invasion or a budget crisis, the project's

Table 2: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for WLEIS Dimensions (n=21)

WLEIS Dimension	Mean	Std. Deviation (σ)	Ranking
Self-Emotion Appraisal (SEA)	4.12	0.58	1
Use of Emotion (UOE)	4.05	0.61	2
Others' Emotion Appraisal (OEA)	3.85	0.72	3
Regulation of Emotion (ROE)	3.62	0.84	4

Self-Emotion Appraisal (SEA) yielded the highest mean score ($M=4.12$). This suggests that Durban-based CPMs possess a strong ability to understand and express their own emotions. In the context of resilience, this is a foundational step; a self-aware manager is better equipped to recognise when they are reaching a state of burnout or "threat-rigidity" (Zhang & Hao, 2022).

The Use of Emotion (UOE) dimension followed closely ($M=4.05$). This indicates that the participants are highly capable of directing their emotions toward productive goals. This "catalytic" attribute is essential for sustainability, as it enables CPMs to remain motivated despite systemic shocks, such as supply chain disruptions (Aghimien & Aigbavboa, 2024).

resilience is compromised (Phakoana & Harinarain, 2025). The higher standard deviation indicates that emotional regulation remains a highly individualised and inconsistent skill within the profession.

4.2.2. Discussion: EI as a Catalyst for Resilience

Although the study primarily examined emotional intelligence from a project leadership perspective, the findings also have broader implications for sustainability within the built environment. Sustainable construction extends beyond environmental performance and encompasses social dimensions such as stakeholder engagement, workforce well-being, collaboration, and inclusive decision-making. The emotional intelligence dimensions identified in this study, particularly empathy, self-regulation, and social

skills, are directly relevant to these objectives. Construction project managers who demonstrate high levels of emotional intelligence are better positioned to foster positive working relationships, manage stakeholder expectations, resolve conflicts constructively, and create supportive team environments. These outcomes contribute to the social sustainability of construction projects by enhancing trust, reducing workplace tensions, and supporting long-term organisational resilience.

Furthermore, sustainable project delivery increasingly requires collaboration among diverse stakeholders with competing priorities. Emotional intelligence enables project leaders to navigate these complexities by facilitating communication and consensus-building. In this regard, emotional intelligence may be viewed as a leadership capability that supports not only project performance but also the broader sustainability agenda within the built environment.

Linking these results to sustainability, it becomes clear that technical knowledge of "green building" is insufficient if the CPM lacks the ROE to stick to these goals when a project falls behind schedule. As Wong and Law (2002) argue, EI dimensions are not static; they can be developed. Therefore, the "catalytic" potential of EI for a sustainable built environment in South Africa remains largely untapped due to a lack of formal behavioural training in the sector. The findings therefore suggest that resilient and sustainable construction depends not only on technological innovation and environmental management systems but also on the emotional and interpersonal competencies of those responsible for leading projects.

4.2.2.1 Navigating Systemic Shocks through ROE and UOE

The results indicated a high mean for Use of Emotion but a comparatively lower and more volatile score for Regulation of Emotion (ROE). In the South African context, where "construction mafia" disruptions and labour strikes are prevalent (Phakoana & Harinarain, 2025), resilience requires more than just knowing how to stay motivated (UOE); it requires the cognitive capacity to remain calm under extreme external pressure (ROE). According to Watermeyer and Phillips (2020), project failure in South Africa often stems from reactive decision-making during crises. The data suggests that while CPMs are personally driven, their ability to regulate distress, the "shield" of resilience, is the weakest link. As Wong and Law (2002) posit, leaders with lower ROE may struggle to recover from psychological burnout, which, in this study's context, directly threatens the long-term sustainability of the built environment.

4.2.2.2 Social Sustainability and the OEA Gap

Social sustainability in South Africa is defined by inclusive stakeholder management and the successful

integration of local communities into the project lifecycle. The moderate score in Others' Emotion Appraisal (OEA) represents a critical bottleneck. Aghimien and Aigbavboa (2024) argue that the "human-centric" driver of construction performance is the manager's ability to read and respond to the site's emotional climate. A CPM with high OEA can detect rising resentment or anxiety among subcontractors and labourers before it manifests as a work stoppage. The findings suggest that Durban-based CPMs possess a "threshold" level of OEA. However, it has not yet reached the "catalytic" level required to fully de-escalate the unique socio-political tensions inherent in local infrastructure delivery.

4.2.2.3 The Feedback Loop: From SEA to Sustainable Outcomes

The highest score recorded was in Self-Emotion Appraisal (SEA), which aligns with the high educational and experience levels of the sample (52% postgraduate). This suggests that the sampled CPMs are highly reflective and self-aware. Literature suggests that SEA is the "engine" of the WLEIS model; without understanding one's own emotions, one cannot effectively regulate them or use them to influence others (Wong & Law, 2002). In terms of sustainability, this self-awareness enables CPMs to align their personal values with global green building standards. However, the study reveals a "decoupling" effect: while CPMs are self-aware (SEA) and motivated (UOE), the lack of consistent emotional regulation (ROE) prevents these internal values from consistently translating into resilient, sustainable external actions when the project environment becomes hostile.

4.2.2.4 Synthesis with the Knowledge Gap

These results directly address the knowledge gap identified in the introduction. While global literature (Zhang & Hao, 2022) emphasises the general importance of EI, this study localises that importance. It demonstrates that, in South Africa, EI acts as a catalyst, providing the "emotional infrastructure" necessary to support the technical infrastructure. The findings suggest that the industry's current resilience is "motivation-heavy" but "regulation-light." To achieve the aim of a truly sustainable built environment, the industry must transition from relying on individual grit among CPMs (UOE) to systematic, EI-driven conflict management and emotional regulation.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The primary aim of this study was to evaluate the level of Emotional Intelligence (EI) among Construction Project Managers (CPMs) in the Durban metropolitan area and to determine its role as a catalyst for resilient and sustainable project management. By applying the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS), the research has demonstrated that while CPMs possess high levels of Self-Emotion Appraisal (SEA) and Use

of Emotion (UOE), there is a critical deficit in Regulation of Emotion (ROE) and a moderate capacity for Others' Emotion Appraisal (OEA).

The study concludes that EI is indeed a functional catalyst for resilience; however, its current application in the South African construction sector is "motivation-heavy" but "regulation-light." In a landscape defined by socio-political volatility and the "construction mafia," the ability to remain motivated (UOE) is insufficient without the ability to de-escalate conflict (OEA) and maintain cognitive clarity under extreme duress (ROE). Therefore, achieving a truly sustainable and resilient built environment requires a shift from purely technical project management to a model that prioritises the emotional infrastructure of its leaders.

Beyond its contribution to project leadership, this study highlights the potential role of emotional intelligence in advancing the social dimensions of sustainable construction. The findings suggest that emotionally intelligent construction project managers are better equipped to create collaborative, inclusive, and resilient project environments. As the construction industry increasingly embraces sustainability principles, the development of emotional intelligence may serve as an important mechanism for strengthening stakeholder relationships, supporting workforce well-being, and enhancing the long-term sustainability of project outcomes.

The practical implications of the findings are significant for a range of stakeholders. Professional

bodies, employers, construction firms, higher education institutions, and continuous professional development (CPD) providers can benefit from the results by incorporating EI-focused leadership development into training curricula and professional competency frameworks. Strengthening these competencies among current and future CPMs may improve project delivery, reduce conflict-related disruptions, and support more resilient leadership practices in the South African construction sector.

Based on the findings, the study recommends that:

- Professional councils and industry bodies such as SACPCMP should consider recognising emotional intelligence as a core managerial competency for project leadership accreditation and CPD;
- construction firms should integrate EI assessment and leadership coaching into management development initiatives;
- universities and professional training institutions within the built environment should embed emotional intelligence and resilience leadership into construction management curricula; and

While this study provides important insights, it was limited to a relatively small sample within the Durban metropolitan area. Future research should expand the scope to include other provinces and metropolitan regions in South Africa to enable broader comparative analysis.

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