

Research Article

Affective Domain of Learning and Perceived Acquisition of Soft Skills Among Tourism and Hospitality Diploma Students in Nairobi County: The Moderating Influence of Course Enrolled

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Abstract

The tourism and Hospitality landscape globally is rapidly changing to accommodate evolving dynamics of customer expectations that dictate consumption and business success in the serviced driven experiential industry. This has necessitated the need for industry professionals who possess industry specific soft skills to spur growth while maintaining competitiveness. Despite the growing interest in the integration of Affective Domain of Learning (ADL) framework into training, the interplay of this framework and perceived acquisition of soft skills among tourism and hospitality diploma students is under-investigated. This study recognizes the interdisciplinary nature of the hospitality sector characterized by different clusters of courses, each requiring different affective learning activities. Therefore, this research leveraged the humanism learning theory to explore the moderating influence of course enrolled on the relationship between the ADL framework and perceived acquisition of soft skills among students enrolled in different courses in the tourism and hospitality diploma training programme. The study employed a quantitative research design that targeted 822 second and third year students pursuing diploma in tourism and hospitality spread across five institutions in Nairobi County of Kenya. The study employed the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach on data drawn from a sample of 240 students to show that despite the ADL framework having an independent positive and significant effect on students perceived acquisition of soft skills, the course enrolled negatively moderated this effect, an indication that the course enrolled determines the pressure to be exerted on the ADL framework. Educators and industry stakeholders should therefore take cognizance of the importance of the course enrolled when designing learning activities to include in the ADL framework. However, for enhanced external validity, future studies should seek to expand the geographic scope to include more counties, countries, or undergraduate tourism and hospitality students; as well as considering experimental designs to minimize social desirability biases.

Keywords

Affective Domain of Learning, Perceived Acquisition, Soft Skills, Moderating, Course Enrolled, Tourism and Hospitality Diploma Students

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1. Introduction

The tourism and hospitality industry is pivotal to Kenya's economic development. Evidence shows that the tourism sector generated up to 8.8% of the country's GDP by the year 2018 [17]. In addition to economic growth, the industry that encompasses travel and tourism, accommodation, and food and beverage enhances job creation, foreign exchange earnings, cultural preservation, socio-cultural exchange, and infrastructural development [20, 60]. However, with the tourism and hospitality sector looking to recover from the slump witnessed during the Covid-19 pandemic, the importance of skilled workforce for the industry cannot be overemphasized [43]. In modern society, tourism trends are showing a lot of dynamism in customer expectations, driving the hospitality industry towards experiential and service orientation [24]. More than ever before, tourism and hospitality stakeholders are seeking industry professionals who possess critical industry-specific soft skills that are required to navigate the changing business environment and projected growth potential, in order to remain competitive [12]. Consequently, focus is shifting towards tourism and hospitality training programmes, whose scope incorporates the required soft skills specific to the industry [17].

Several soft skills have since been identified and associated with the growth of tourism and hospitality, including effective communication, work ethics, teamwork, problem-solving, and leadership [22]. This group of soft and interpersonal skills have been shown to be critical to the sustainability of the tourism and hospitality sector [28]. Therefore, tourism and hospitality training programmes are now turning towards courses that can optimize the potential in the hospitality management programme [2, 66].

In Kenya, interest in tourism and hospitality management courses such as hospitality operations management (HOM), tourism and destination management (TDM), and marketing and business skills (MBS) is soaring. This increasing interest is not only because these courses are highly marketable, but also because skilled hospitality professionals are needed to efficiently manage the many hospitality establishments in the country [36]. Consequently, institutions are taking advantage of the increasing recognition of diploma in hospitality management as viable alternatives and lucrative options to offer diverse courses under the diploma in tourism and hospitality management programme [13].

The landscape for formal education in tourism and hospitality in Kenya has undergone several curriculum shifts directed towards a practically oriented tourism and hospitality education, starting with the establishment of Kenya Utalii College in 1975 [37]. The growing industry demand for skilled professionals has since resulted in the mushrooming of other public and private colleges, seeking to offer the tourism and hospitality management programme. Among these institutions are universities which have become key players in developing manpower for the industry in Kenya [59]. Alt-

hough the initial focus of tourism and hospitality training in Kenya was to offer certificate and diploma curricular, as developed by the then Kenya Institute of Education (KIE), now known as the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), more advanced programmes, including the degree programme, have since been introduced to scale up skills that the industry requires [35].

Despite spirited efforts to offer training to tourism and hospitality professionals at certificate, diploma and degree level, there is growing concern in Kenya, as is the case globally, that a soft skills gap exists among tourism and hospitality graduates [23, 37]. For instance, although the industry relies heavily on emotional skills in the work place, scholars point out the lukewarm interest extended to emotional skills development in the tourism and hospitality curricular [45, 46]. These scholars have opened discussions on the importance of integrating the Affective Domain of Learning (ADL) framework in the tourism and hospitality curricular [34, 67].

Affective learning, defined as the process of acquiring knowledge, attitudes and skills through emotional engagement, recognizes the importance of emotions in not only shaping cognitive processes and decision-making, but also in memory retention [8]. It influences individuals' behaviour, values, perspectives, thought processes, interest and motivation. Research shows that affective learning in the context of higher education focuses on fostering positive emotions by providing the enabling learning environment [44]. Through learned affects, individual learners are exposed to action orientation as they strive to safeguard their own, and societal interests for increased communal connection and belonging [10]. Therefore, affective learning augments cognitive development and contributes to students' holistic development [53].

Although there is growing interest in the ADL framework in tourism and hospitality training programmes, the complex relationship between this framework and perceived acquisition of soft skills among students in tourism and hospitality has been under-investigated. Scholarly evidence demonstrates that the tourism and hospitality sector is interdisciplinary in nature, and subsumes disciplines like accommodation, transportation, event management, food and beverage, and entertainment all of which require diverse approaches [16]. These scholars argue that the diversity in tourism and hospitality disciplines reflects different clusters of courses with potentially different influences on skills to be learned.

Therefore, this study recognized the complex interplay between the ADL framework and perceived acquisition of soft skills under the different clusters of tourism and hospitality courses, and sought to employ the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach to advance a predictive model. Such a model, would predict the moderating influence of the course enrolled on the nexus between the ADL framework and perceived acquisition of soft

skills among students pursuing a diploma in tourism and hospitality in educational institutions in Nairobi County. Specifically, three objectives were addressed, including modeling perceived acquisition of soft skills on ADL using PLS-SEM, establishing the direct effect of the ADL framework on perceived acquisition of soft skills, and examining the moderating effect of the course enrolled on the relationship between the ADL framework and perceived acquisition of soft skills.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Underpinning

This research was anchored on the humanism learning theory propounded by Carl Rogers, James Bugental, and Abraham Maslow in the early 1900s [42]. This theory was used to underpin affective learning by focusing on individual students' holistic learning, recognizing the students' individuality, and the need to entrench both the cognitive and affective elements of learning [41]. According to the proponents of humanism, learners are whole beings who deserve the development of affective and emotional states alongside their cognitive development [51]. The theory is based on the philosophy of existentialism, which views existence as specific and individual, and argues that when being guided, humans require the individual free-will to realize their self-actualization [56]. In view of this existentialism philosophy, we posit that perceived acquisition of soft skills is an individual goal, which students pursuing diploma in tourism and hospitality ought to be guided to achieve in a humanistic manner. Embedding the ADL framework in the tourism and hospitality diploma program therefore, builds upon the humanistic theory principle that considers students as whole people whose emotions should be handled in an empathetic way. Moreover, the diverse nature of the clusters of tourism and hospitality courses requires that students should be driven by their own goals, interests and passion when identifying the clusters of their choice.

2.2. Perceived Acquisition of Soft Skills

Soft skills in tourism and hospitality include competencies such as communication, interpersonal relations, and emotional stability which, in addition to complementing hard or technical skills, also play a critical role in assuring opportunities of employment, adaptability, and work excellence. Students ought to acquire soft skills to improve their work performance, adapt to their careers, and be able to meet customer needs [64]. Among such soft skills, leadership, communication, teamwork, problem solving, and emotional intelligence have been conceptualized as critical to life skills relevant for the tourism and hospitality industry [58]. Institutions offering tourism and hospitality programmes have endeavoured to integrate soft skills in their training curricula.

Yet, students still exhibit inconsistency in their perceptions of acquisition of these soft skills. Through a scale to gauge satisfaction among students regarding acquisition of soft skills, it has been empirically shown that there is variation between actual and expected learning outcomes, reflecting the potential for differences among them in the manner they perceive soft skills acquisition [49]. Meanwhile, scholars have decried the fragmented nature of the soft skills acquisition process, which fails to recognize their indispensable roles in the service industry [62].

Although students recognize the indispensable role of soft skills in their after-school work-life, they often perceive their acquisition of such skills differently, especially since educators have themselves been found short of the required competencies and tools to pass on soft skills to students [3]. Moreover, educational and cultural variations across nations and geographical regions, require context-specific soft skills, leading to varied perceptions among students regarding their acquisition [54]. Importantly, perceptions of acquisition of soft skills provide the drive among students for increased outcomes for employment. This then requires that educational programmes should be designed with the intention of bridging the curriculum with industry expectations alongside students' needs [48].

2.3. The Affective Domain of Learning

Affective learning scholars label learning elements in the affective domain as emotional resources which subsume behaviour, interest, motivation, values, morals and beliefs [30, 34]. Affective learning emphasizes recognition of students' perspectives during the learning process, and the specific strategies to employ for their individual internalization of learning experiences [18]. The affective learning domain is hierarchical in nature, implementing learning activities in order of complexity from simple to more complex. The first level of the hierarchy is the receiving level, whose focus is to expose learners to the affective elements of openness to experience and the willingness to hear. Research has demonstrated that learning experiences are enriched when learners listen to perspectives of others keenly and when they also react to stimuli in the learning environment [47].

The second level of the affective domain hierarchy is the responding level, perceived to be slightly more complex than the receiving level [1]. According to Akbar, the responding level focuses on students' active participation and willingness to be engaged, a paradigm shift from them being seen as mere rote listeners. Meanwhile, the valuing level, appearing mid-way in the hierarchy, builds on learner commitment and involvement, manifested in student's consistent demonstration of desired behaviour as a way of transcending simple engagement [31]. In essence, under the valuing level, learners internalize ideas and are able to identify and connect with peers while accepting the worth of these peers. The organizing level, perceived as a higher order level of the affective domain

of learning, focuses on students' ability to merge newly acquired values with their already existing ones [15]. This level allows learners to develop a consistent and coherent interior structure through which to behave and make decisions. The fifth and final level is the characterizing level, seen as the highest in the ADL hierarchy. Scholars argue that if this level is well executed, learners gain full adoption and internalization of values within their personal philosophies and adopt coherent behaviour [25].

2.4. Affective Domain of Learning and Perceived Acquisition of Soft Skills

The service-centrist nature of the tourism and hospitality industry has raised the demand for soft skills such as interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, and communication. Therefore, affective learning focusing on learner attitude, values and emotions continues to attract scholarly interest, seeking to explore how it impacts acquisition of such skills. For instance, a systematic literature review focused on the top 30 soft skills commonly employed to prepare tourism and hospitality graduates for the job place. Through an elaborate analysis, the review highlighted skills such as teamwork, adaptability and problem solving among the consistently employed soft skills for the hospitality profession. However, high levels of disparity were noted in the way that those graduates perceived acquisition of such skills, raising concerns regarding the potential of the programmes to translate curriculum objectives into practical skills [50]. Clearly, the study opened a gap on the theoretical grounding of tourism and hospitality in affective learning.

Meanwhile, seeking to contribute to the discourse on how the European Skills Agenda shapes sustainable tourism. An empirical study leveraging the soft skill confirmed that soft skills play a critical role in tourism and hospitality workplace, and asserted that emotional labour relies heavily on soft skills to ascertain and ensure service excellence and sustainability in the tourism and hospitality industry [11]. However, the study also determined that students viewed the inclusion of soft skills in the curriculum to be inconsistent with policy expectations, an indication of the lack of attention given to affective learning in the curricular. A discernible gap in their study was the lack of a micro-level focus, that would critically examine students learning experiences and perceptions towards specific affective elements and soft skills acquisition.

Scholars have also used the TVET hospitality graduates' context to investigate the role played by communication skills in the graduates' success. Using a literature review approach, they highlighted the central roles that emotional and communication skills have previously played in graduates' chances of being employed, especially in the post-pandemic era, calling for their inclusion in training alongside technical skills. However, their failure to show the contribution of affective learning on soft skills acquisition

calls for more research linking soft skills acquisition to the ADL framework [14].

2.5. Tourism and Hospitality Courses Enrolled and Soft Skills Development

As the tourism and hospitality industry continues to evolve towards the integration of soft skills with technical skills among graduates, a range of new courses continue to be designed. However, most of these courses are mostly categorized into hospitality operations management, tourism and destination management, and marketing and business management [36]. Retrospectively, the hospitality operations management course seeks to expose trainees to the practical and procedural requirements of the hospitality venture operations [63]. In contrast, the hospitality operations management category subsumes courses in guest services and front desk, housekeeping and maintenance, food and beverage, and revenue management and marketing [39].

The courses under the tourism destination management category integrate elements of tourism, infrastructure, culture and sustainability requirements and seek to raise trainee awareness on responsible travel and minimum negative environmental impacts [52]. Meanwhile, the marketing and business management category of tourism courses seek to expose the trainee to persuasive communication, an important element in attracting visitors in the changing business environment [61]. Empirical evidence has demonstrated a variation in the contributions made to soft skills acquisition by the three categories, raising questions with regards to whether the nature of the course enrolled would in any way impact the relationship between affective learning and soft skills development.

For instance, a study on soft skills required for hiring found that the vigor involved in the hospitality operations management course was equivalent to an immersion approach of learning through which students' soft skills such as problem-solving, time management and communication are enhanced [40]. Moreover, a study on practical learning determined that the hospitality operations management course exposes trainees to the practical environment which significantly promotes the industry [38]. Regarding the tourism and destination management course, research demonstrated that the course provides an avenue for competences that promote destination competitiveness [5]. They highlighted adaptability, critical thinking and cross-cultural communication among such competences. Such competencies are facilitated through the collaborative networks that arise within a destination [4]. In contrast, further research implicitly associates marketing and business management courses in tourism and hospitality with students' development of persuasive communication, a critical skill to apply in negotiation and entrepreneurship [6, 27].

It is therefore with this potential for different tourism and hospitality courses to nurture different skills sets among

graduates that we examine the moderating effect of the course enrolled on the relationship between the ADL framework and perceived acquisition of soft skills among tourism and hospitality diploma students.

2.6. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this research (Figure 1) gives the interrelationships between the ADL framework measured through its five levels and perceived acquisition of soft skills measured via perceived acquisition of communication, customer orientation, and teamwork/collaboration skills;

and the moderating influence of course enrolled (hospitality operations management, tourism and destination management, and marketing and business management). Grounded in the humanism learning theory, the framework presupposes that the affective domain of learning, through its levels has a direct effect on perceived acquisition of soft skills among trainees. However, we also posit that this direct effect can be moderated by the tourism and hospitality management course that a student enrolls in. Through this framework, an empirical testing is used to inform the development of tourism and hospitality training programmes that are responsive to trainees' emotions and their specific course lineage.

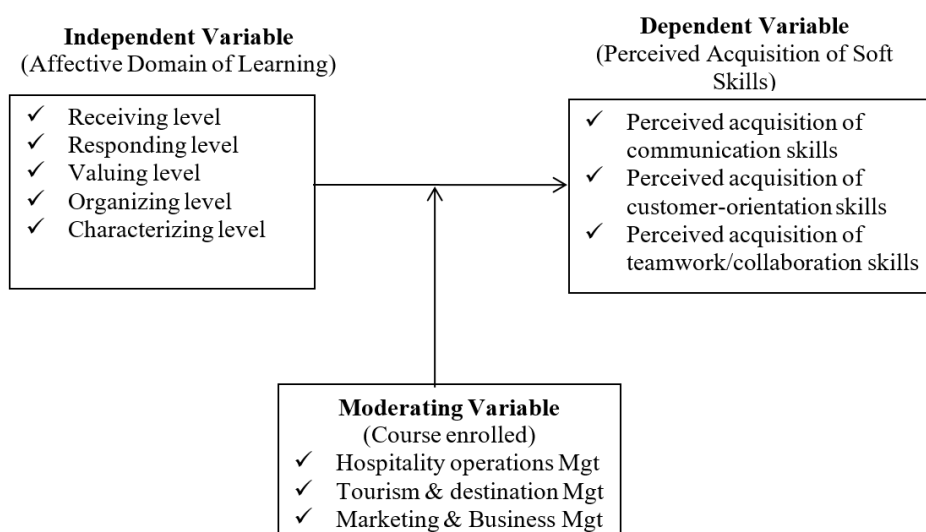


Figure 1. Conceptualized interrelationships between the latent variables.

2.7. Research Hypotheses

In line with this conceptual framework developed and adapted to guide this study, the following postulations were tested.

H₀₁: The PLS-SEM is not a suitable approach to model the interrelationships between ADL framework, perceived acquisition of soft skills, and Course enrolled

H₀₂: The ADL framework has no significant effect on perceived acquisition of soft skills

H₀₃: Course enrolled has no significant moderating effect on the relationship between ADL framework and perceived acquisition of soft skills

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Target Population and Sampling Design

This study probed the moderating influence of course enrolled on the relationship between the ADL framework

and perceived acquisition of soft skills. The study used a quantitative design that targeted 2nd year and 3rd year diploma students enrolled in various courses in the tourism and hospitality program in institutions in Nairobi County. A reconnaissance study in the targeted institutions revealed a total population of 822 students spread across five institutions. Using the sample size formula suggested by Krejcie and Morgan in 1970, a sample size of 262 students was drawn [29]. The sampling was conducted proportionately to ensure that students were randomly selected from the respective institutions.

The PLS-SEM's was employed in data analysis due to its significance of handling the complex interrelation between the ADL frameworks, perceived acquisition of soft skills, and course enrolled. PLS-SEM as an approach that examines variances has been associated with estimations involving complex relationships and bridges predictive modeling and causal explanation [32, 33]. Both the measurement (outer) and structural (inner) models were evaluated to test their robustness. The PLS algorithm comprising a maximum of 300 iterations assessed collinearity, coefficients of determination, and the effect sizes. In contrast, basic bootstrapping of 5,000

subsamples tested outer weights and path coefficients. The 5,000 subsamples were deemed large enough for yielding stable standard error estimates as suggested by [19].

3.2. Measurement Model Specification

The measurement model involved three latent constructs, including the ADL framework (lower order and upper order), perceived acquisition of soft skills (communication, customer-orientation, teamwork and collaboration), and course enrolled (hospitality operations management, tourism & destination management, and marketing & business management). The three constructs were modeled as formative variables, an indication that the constructs were defined by the respective manifest variables (indicators) as opposed to simply being reflective of the indicators.

The ADL framework was conceptualized as an exogenous latent variable defined by the lower order affective domain (Lower ADL) comprising the receiving, responding and val-

uing levels; and the Upper ADL comprising the organizing and characterizing levels as determined a priori. Similarly, perceived acquisition of soft skills (PAS) was conceptualized as the first endogenous construct defined using three a priori determined formative indicators of perceived acquisition of communication skills (Comm), perceived acquisition of customer-orientation skills (Cust. Orient), and perceived acquisition of teamwork and collaboration skills (T/Collab).

Course enrolled was conceptualized as the second exogenous variable capable of influencing the relationship between the ADL framework and perceived acquisition of soft skills. It was defined by three formative indicators determined through theoretical deduction. The three indicators included hospitality operation management (Hos. OP), tourism & destination management (Tour. Dest), and marketing & business management (Mar. Bus). Therefore Fig. 2 presents the final conceptual model followed by the resulting outer and inner model specifications.

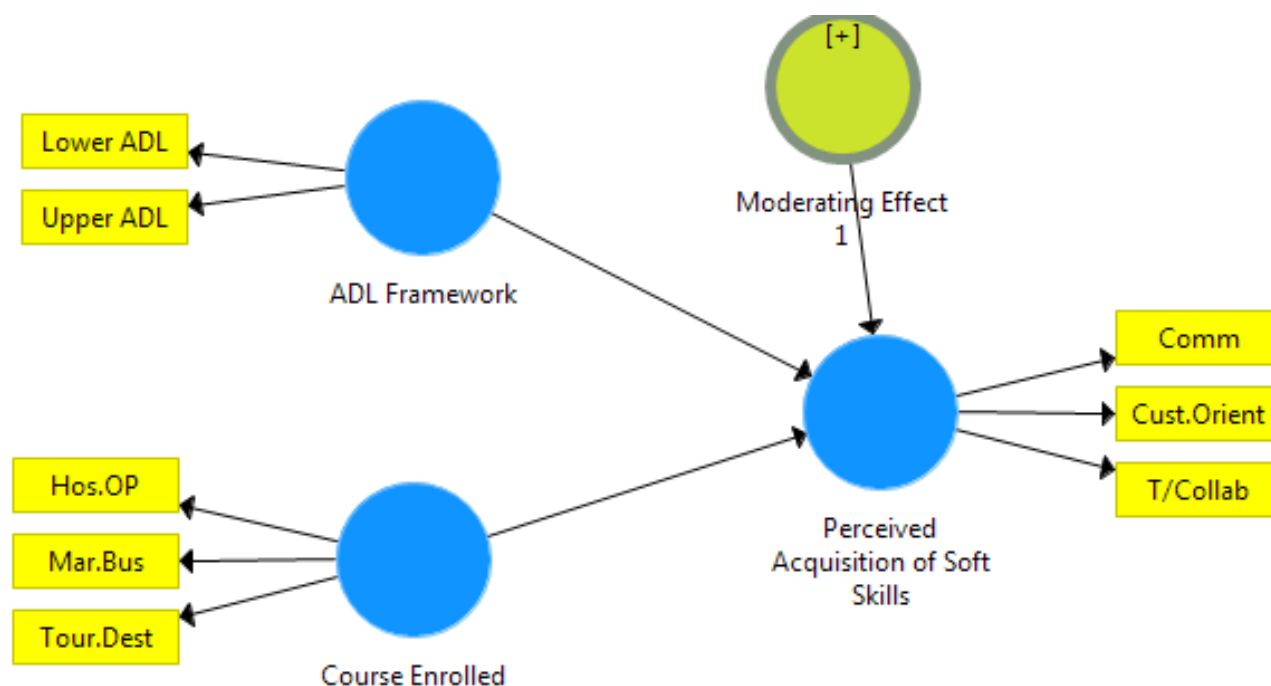


Figure 2. Final Conceptual Model.

3.3. Outer Models

Three outer models were specified in line with the three constructs under study

$$(1) \text{ ADL Framework} = \lambda_1 \text{ Lower ADL} + \lambda_2 \text{ Upper ADL} + \varepsilon$$

$$(2) \text{ Course Enrolled} = \lambda_3 \text{ Hos. Op} + \lambda_4 \text{ Mar. Bus} + \lambda_5 \text{ Tour. Dest} + \varepsilon$$

$$(3) \text{ PAS} = \lambda_6 \text{ Comm} + \lambda_7 \text{ Cust. Orient} + \lambda_8 \text{ T/Collab} + \varepsilon$$

In these outer models, the contributions of the formative indicators to the constructs they define were probed. ADL

represents the affective domain learning framework, Hos. Op represents the “hospitality operations management course”, Mar. Bus, the “marketing & business management course” and Tour. Dest, the “tourism and destination management course.” Comm. represents perceived acquisition of communication skills, Cust. Orient represents customer orientation, and T/Collab represents teamwork/collaboration. λ_i represents the regressors showing the contributions of the indicators to their respective constructs (in this case outer weights). ε represents variations in the constructs unaccounted for by the indicators.

3.4. Inner Models

Two inner (structural) models were equally specified to show the respective effects of ADL framework and course enrolled on perceived acquisition of soft skills, and the moderating effect of course enrolled on the ADL-perceived acquisition of soft skills nexus.

$$(4) \text{PAS} = \beta_1 \text{ADL Framework} + \beta_2 \text{Course Enrolled} + \varepsilon$$

$$(5) \text{PAS} = \beta_3 \text{ADL Framework} + \beta_4 \text{Course Enrolled} + \beta_5 \text{Mod. Effect} + \varepsilon$$

In these models, PAS represents perceived acquisition of soft skills; ADL represents the affective domain of learning framework, β_i are the respective effects on PAS, and ε is the variance in PAS unexplained in the two models.

4. Results

4.1. Sample Description

A total of 262 questionnaires were developed and distributed to the 262 sampled students. Two research assistants were recruited to help in dropping and picking the questionnaires. Completed questionnaires were then subjected to screening and cleaning, leading to 240 cases retained for analysis. The gender distribution revealed that a large proportion of students pursuing the tourism and hospitality diploma programme were female (77.9%). Most of the students in the programme (48.8%) were in the age bracket 20 to 24 years. The course enrolled distribution indicated preferences for the hospitality operations management course (38.8%) and the tourism and destination management course (36.7%). However, the marketing and business management course was also well represented (24.6%).

Table 1. Sample Description.

Student Back-ground Profile	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	53	22.1%
	Female	187	77.9%
Age	Below 20	43	17.9%
	20-24	117	48.8%
	25-30	58	24.2%
	Above 30	22	9.2%
	Hospitality operations Mgt	93	38.8%
Course enrolled	Tourism & Destination Mgt	88	36.7%
	Marketing & Business Mgt	59	24.6%

4.2. Application of the ADL Framework

Descriptive analysis of the application of the ADL framework in the tourism and hospitality diploma programme revealed that the trainees were aptly being exposed to the lower ADL levels (Table 2). Most trainees registered strong agreements to items measuring exposure to the receiving, responding and valuing levels. However, the results through the high levels of disagreement among trainees indicated that the upper order ADL levels of organizing and characterizing were not receiving much attention in the training.

Table 2. Application of the ADL Framework in Training.

	SA	D	MA	A	SA
Receiving Level					
The training exposes us to real life experiences	1.3%	2.1%	2.5%	35.8%	58.3%
We are encouraged to use gesticulations during training	1.3%	2.1%	2.5%	37.1%	57.1%
The training nurtures a willingness to share knowledge	0.4%	1.3%	1.7%	32.5%	64.2%
Responding Level					
The training encourages non-verbal cues as responses	0.4%	1.3%	1.7%	32.5%	64.2%
Feedback is emphasized during training	0.4%	1.7%	1.7%	37.1%	59.2%
The training emphasizes positive, energizing, and solution-oriented relationships.	9.2%	0.0%	6.7%	36.3%	47.9%
Valuing Level					
The training nurtures consistent behaviour	5.0%	0.4%	12.1%	34.6%	47.9%
The training supports engagement in reflective debate to internalize ideas	3.3%	0.8%	5.8%	53.8%	36.3%

	SA	D	MA	A	SA
The training emphasizes the inherent significance of demonstrating commitment to others.	2.9%	3.3%	9.2%	40.4%	44.2%
The training fosters a positive perception of colleagues.	3.3%	13.8%	7.1%	28.3%	47.5%
Organizing level					
The practical nature of the training provides a clear vision of individual progress.	15.8%	40.0%	21.3%	20.4%	2.5%
The training has nurtured me to classify my values.	15.8%	38.3%	22.1%	20.4%	3.3%
The training emphasizes the balance personal needs and those of other trainees.	15.4%	39.6%	21.7%	20.8%	2.5%
Characterizing Level					
The training instills the values of trust and conflict resolution.	15.8%	37.5%	23.8%	20.4%	2.5%
The training instills the value of consistency in words and actions.	14.6%	39.6%	21.3%	20.4%	4.2%
The training enhances personal beliefs and past experiences in task performance	14.6%	39.6%	21.3%	21.7%	2.9%
The training emphasizes an approach to situations that is based on a clear set of values.	15.8%	40.0%	21.3%	20.4%	2.5%

4.3. Perceptions of Acquisition of Soft Skills

Results of the descriptive analysis seeking to establish the current perceptions among the trainees regarding acquisition of soft skills revealed that most of them deemed themselves to have acquired the requisite skills (Table 3). Respondents

specifically agreed to have improved their communication skills, customer skills and teamwork and collaboration. They showed strong agreement to being able to seamlessly interact with peers and trainers, handling customers with professionalism, and collaborating to achieve desired goals. However, they showed disagreement towards the ability to resolve conflicts among trainees.

Table 3. Perceptions of Soft Skills Acquisition.

	SA	D	MA	A	SA
Communication Skills					
I believe that I have learned to interact with both peers and trainers.	3.3%	5.8%	24.6%	24.6%	41.7%
I have become clearer in conveying the desired information.	6.7%	11.7%	30.8%	40.8%	10.0%
I have learned to adapt my verbal communication tone to suit different situations and individuals.	6.7%	23.3%	9.6%	48.3%	12.1%
Customer orientation					
I am able to handle customer complaints effectively	0.8%	0.8%	2.1%	53.8%	42.5%
I anticipate customer needs and provide enjoyable interactions.	0.4%	0.8%	3.8%	53.3%	41.7%
I am able to uphold professionalism and exhibit empathy towards customers.	1.3%	0.8%	2.5%	53.3%	42.1%
I have been equipped with the ability to perform multiple tasks to effectively meet customer needs.	0.4%	0.4%	2.1%	53.3%	43.8%
Teamwork/Collaboration					
I collaborate with my peers in consistently delivering quality service.	0.4%	0.0%	3.8%	50.4%	45.4%

	SA	D	MA	A	SA
I am able to collaborate, share tasks and to support other trainees towards realizing desired goals	0.4%	0.4%	3.3%	51.3%	44.6%
I am adaptable in my roles to optimize my outputs.	0.8%	0.8%	4.2%	50.8%	43.3%
I am capable of resolving conflicts among trainees.	0.4%	47.3%	47.9%	1.0%	3.3%

Model Evaluation

Outer Models

The outer models were subjected to an evaluation to test the suitability of the formative indicators. Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) were first assessed to test for collinearity. Using suggestions in existing research, the VIF threshold was set at 3.3. All the VIF values were within the required threshold (<3.3), indicating lack of collinearity issues among the indicators [9].

Formative Indicator

VIF

Mar. Bus	1.437
T/Collab	1.723
Tour. Dest	1.609
Upper ADL	1.773

Table 4. Collinearity Test Results.

Formative Indicator	VIF
Comm	1.579
Cust. Orient	1.757
Hos. OP	1.587
Lower ADL	1.773

The second outer model evaluation technique was to assess the outer weights, mainly preferred for formative indicators. Under this approach, indicators with statistically significant outer weights were retained. However, non-significant outer weights falling below 0.5 were dropped. Results (Table 5) show that the initial outer weights were all significant except the outer weight for the Mar. Bus indicator whose p-value was 0.052. Since the Mar. Bus indicator was also below 0.5, it was omitted from the course enrolled construct.

Table 5. Outer Weights.

Formative Indicator	Original Sample (O) Outer Weight	p-value	Outer Weight after deleting Mar. Bus	p-value
Comm -> PAS	0.281	0.002	0.283	0.004
Cust. Orient -> PAS	0.501	0.000	0.520	0.000
Hos. OP -> Course enrolled	0.556	0.000	0.628	0.000
Lower ADL -> ADL Framework	0.669	0.000	0.672	0.000
Mar. Bus -> Course enrolled	0.211	0.052	deleted	-
T/Collab -> PAS	0.398	0.000	0.376	0.001
Tour. Dest -> Course enrolled	0.426	0.000	0.502	0.000
Upper ADL -> ADL Framework	0.419	0.000	0.283	0.000

4.4. Inner Models

Evaluation of the inner models focused on establishing the direct and moderating effects (Figure 3) and also establishing

the effect size as suggested by [57]. From the results, the combined variance explained in perceived acquisition of soft skills associated with the ADL framework, course enrolled and their interaction was 49.4% (R-square = 0.494).

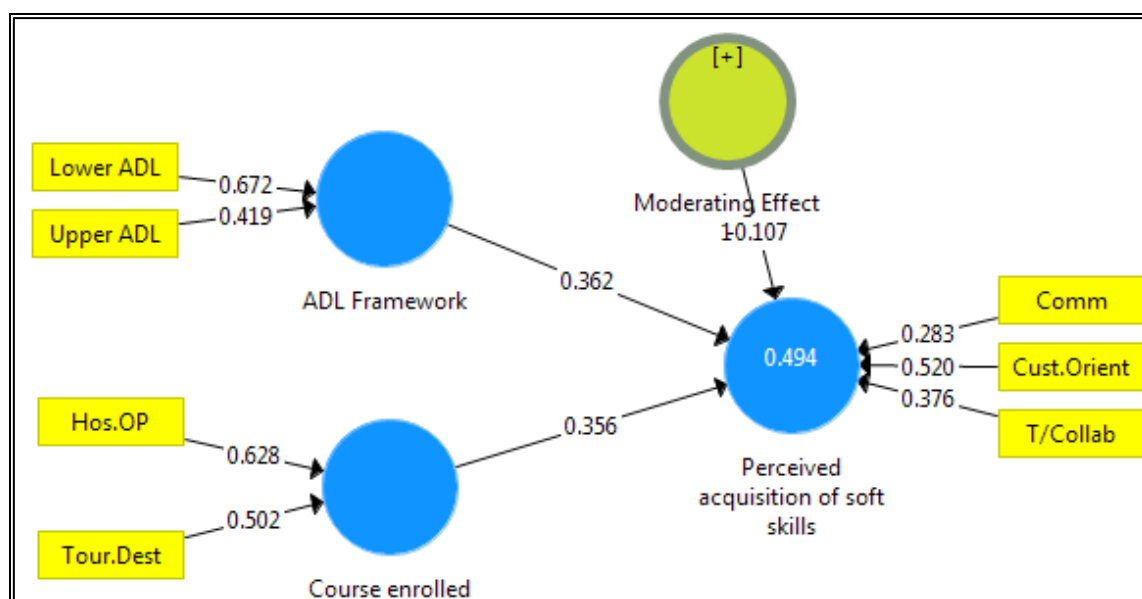


Figure 3. Final Structural (Inner) Model.

The path diagram associated with the direct and moderating effects as presented in Table 6 revealed the following results. Both the ADL framework ($\beta=0.0362$, $p<0.001$) and course enrolled ($\beta=0.356$, $p<0.001$) were positive and highly significant predictors of perceived acquisition of soft skills. However, the ADL framework ($f^2=0.154$) had a slightly higher effect size than course enrolled ($f^2=0.143$). Meanwhile,

course enrolled had a negative and significant moderating effect on the relationship between use of the ADL framework and perceived acquisition of soft skills ($\beta=-0.107$, $p<0.05$). The effect size was nevertheless very minimal ($f^2=0.031$). The negative moderating effect signified reducing pressure on the ADL framework in some courses while requiring support of the ADL framework in others.

Table 6. Path Coefficients.

Construct	Regression coefficient (β)	p-values	Effect Size (f^2)
1. ADL Framework → PAS	0.362	0.000	0.154
2. Moderating Effect 1 → PAS	-0.107	0.037	0.031
3. Course enrolled → PAS	0.356	0.000	0.143

5. Discussion

In addressing the three specific objectives, this study contributed to existing discourse on the ADL framework as an ideal framework through which tourism and hospitality graduates can improve the required soft skills for the workplace. The use of the PLS-SEM for instance, recognized the complex and multidimensional nature of the three latent variables under study. Research has shown that PLS-SEM is suitable for modeling latent variables defined by formative indicators [55]. Besides, the use of the PLS-SEM was consistent with the predictive requirements seeking to establish the direct effect of the ADL framework on perceived acquisition

of soft skills among the tourism and hospitality diploma students. Evidence shows that PLS-SEM has previously provided prediction-oriented solutions, particularly, among Human Resource Development (HRD) researchers [7]. Meanwhile, PLS-SEM has been associated with advanced modeling which supports interaction term modeling and multi-group analysis (MGA), making it suitable in testing the moderation of the course enrolled.

By finding that the use of the ADL framework had a positive and significant effect on perceived acquisition of soft skills among students, this study joined others that have demonstrated the importance of emotional intelligence in hospitality education [45, 65]. However, unlike previous studies, this research went a step further through the outer

weights to show that the lower ADL levels contributed more towards defining affective learning in the tourism and hospitality diploma programme compared to the upper ADL levels. Moreover, the positive and significant effect of the ADL framework on perceived acquisition of soft skills justified the affective basis of learning as rooted in the humanism theory. Humanism posits that emotions and values are the bedrock for learning and should not be peripheral [26]. Therefore, from a practical perspective, the positive impact of the ADL framework on perceived acquisition of soft skills should provide educators with motivation to develop students' real-world competencies by exploiting value-laden experiences.

In finding that the course enrolled negatively moderates the relationship between use of the ADL framework and perceived acquisition of soft skills, this study addressed the gap on the importance of the course enrolled in interrelationships between affective learning and skills development. Scholars have previously explored interactions between course enrolled and learning outcomes [21, 68]. Besides, the negative moderating effect revealed that the course enrolled tended to reduce the pressure required for the ADL framework to impact perceived acquisition of soft skills. Thus a course that is mostly practical-oriented would align less to ADL than purely theory oriented courses.

Yet, previous studies have not examined the contribution the course enrolled would make in shaping the soft skills acquired as a result of employing the ADL framework. Therefore, by showing that course enrolled negatively moderates the relationship between the ADL framework and perceived acquisition of soft skills, this study contributes to existing literature by confirming that the course enrolled may determine the efforts required to apply the ADL framework.

6. Conclusions

The tourism and hospitality diploma programme possesses the potential to expose and sharpen industry-specific soft skills among students enrolled in the programme, especially if it leans towards the ADL framework. This potential is highlighted by examining the complex interrelations involving the ADL framework, perceived acquisition of soft skills, and the course enrollment from a PLS-SEM perspective. The PLS-SEM approach allows stakeholders to not only identify factors that define such variables, but also provides room to identify a model that can predict causes and effects. The determination by the study that the ADL framework positively and significantly impacts perceived acquisition of soft skills illuminates the critical role that values and emotions play in the learning paths, in addition to reinforcing the principles of the humanism theory. While appreciating the importance of the ADL framework in students' perceptions of skills acquisition, educators and industry stakeholders should take note of the role that the course enrolled can play in lessening the pressure on the ADL framework in soft skills formation. En-

rolling in practically-oriented courses would no doubt require different ADL levels compared to theory-oriented courses.

The main limitations of this research lie in the limited opportunity to generalize findings, considerations, and the potential for bias arising from self-reported data. In restricting the research to 2nd and 3rd year tourism and hospitality diploma students drawn from institutions in Nairobi County, this research opened gaps regarding the logic of linking generalizations to other broader populations, including undergraduate tourism and hospitality students, institutions in other Counties in Kenya, and tourism and hospitality students in other countries. Besides, the use of self-reported rating scales may prove to be avenues for bias based on social desirability elements. Future research should therefore look to improve generalization of the findings by widening both the geographic and academic scopes. Moreover, true experimental designs such as the pre-and-post experimental design can be ideal to eliminate social desirability bias.

Abbreviations

ADL	Affective Domain of Learning
Comm	Communication Skills
Cust. Orient	Customer Orientation
GoK	Government of Kenya
HOM	Hospitality Operations Management
Hos. Op	Hospitality Operations Management
HRD	Human Resource Development
KICD	Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development
KIE	Kenya Institute of Education
Mar. Bus	Marketing and Business
MBS	Marketing Business Skills
MGA	Multi-group Analysis
PAS	Perceived Acquisition of Soft Skills
PLS-SEM	Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling
T/Collab	Teamwork and Collaboration
TDM	Tourism Destination Management
Tour. Dest	Tourism Destination
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
VIF	Variance Inflation Factors

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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