

The Role of Tourism and Hotels Faculties in Developing Soft Skills for Undergraduate Students in Egypt

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Abstract

The role of tourism and hotels faculties is not only focusing on academic knowledge and hard skills for students, but also including the development of soft skills in order to improve the quality of graduates and employability. Soft skills development is intended to enable and enhance personal development, participation in learning, and success in employment paths. Soft skills are to be considered as complementary to technical skills (hard skills) and knowledge that students acquire during their university study.

This study aims to exploring the role of tourism and hotels faculties in Egypt in developing soft skills for undergraduate students. A survey tool is designed covering four main study dimensions including: Perception of Soft Skills Importance, Faculty's Encouragement, Types of Soft Skills, and Practiced Methods for Soft Skills Development. A total of 388 completes are collected from students (255 completes) and faculty staff members (93 completes). The study found that the most serious obstacles for developing students' soft skill were: lack of clear policies and programs, the absence of interest of students in developing their soft skills, some staff members give more attention to basic technical skills (hard skills) than soft skills.

This study presented few recommendations that can help the faculties and staff members to better develop soft skills for students including: diversification of soft skills using a variety of methods, offering clear policies and programs for soft skills development such as training programs, seminars and workshops, embodying soft skills in curriculums, and increasing the level of students' activities encouraging them to participate in. Moreover, staff members should give attention to both basic technical skills (hard skills) and soft skills.

Keywords: Soft Skills development, tourism education, tourism in Egypt.

Introduction

Soft skills play an important role in shaping an individual's personality. It is high importance for every student to acquire adequate skills beyond academic or technical knowledge (Schulz, 2008).

Ideally, students of tourism and hotel management faculties should be able demonstrate good communication skills, good presentation skills and be able to think critically. (Chan, 2011). The employers in the tourism industry look for overall intellectual ability and concentrates on flexibility, language skills, oral and written communication skills, outgoing personalities, people skills and IT competencies. Most of the students after their graduation are well aware of the job knowledge, but they lack in necessary job skills (soft skills) (Nagarjuna and Tomy, 2014).

Soft skills are complementary to the technical skills (hard skills) and knowledge that students acquire in the university (Abbas, 2013). Employers generally expect that faculties should enhance graduate skills (both hard and soft and skills) which are part and parcel of teaching and learning (Chan, 2011). Moreover, employers worldwide look for well-rounded graduates who have discipline-specific knowledge and skills (hard skills), desired soft skills and preferably relevant work experience (Al-Sadat et al, 2011). Employability is a set of competencies – knowledge and technical (hard skills), skills and personal attributes (soft skills) - that enable an individual to be employed and be successful in his chosen job (Chan ,2011). Maya (2007) Found that

a soft skills gap is increasingly apparent because of the development of graduates with excellent technical knowledge, but who lack soft business skills.

According to Cimatti (2015) Soft Skills are strategic to be successful in personal and professional life then is essential for a candidate in obtaining any kind of job. Furthermore, soft skills development is intended to enable and enhance personal development, participation in learning and success in employment (Gibb , 2014). Recently, soft skills are also named as practical intelligence and measured by four different aspects: managing tasks, managing career, managing self and managing others (Lee and Lee, 2011., Joseph, et al, 2010).

The role of tourism colleges is not only learning the technical skills of students, but also includes both hard skills and soft skills in order to increase employability and value of graduates (Al-Sadat et al, 2011). Therefore, tourism colleges should provide a platform to develop and enhance the competencies (both hard and soft skills) in students thereby reducing the competency gap between the requirement of the industry and the qualifications provided by the tourism colleges.

There is a little of research papers which studied the developing soft skills for undergraduate students generally and in tourism faculties specifically. From this sprang, the contribution of current this study is to fill the above-mentioned gap in tourism literature. The main purpose of this study is to explore the role of tourism and hotels faculties in developing soft skills for their students. Additionally, this study aims to evaluate the importance of soft skills, investigate the types of soft skills, and to study the used method for developing soft skills in the Egyptian tourism academic institutions. More specifically, the objectives of this current study are as follows:

- 1- identify the extent of perception of the soft skills importance of students;
- 2- explore the essential types of soft skills which faculties introduced for students;
- 3- determine the most used methods for developing soft skills in these faculties;
- 4- identify differences among faculties of tourism and hotels in Egypt in terms of developing soft skills for students.

Literature Review

Soft skills may be considered as generic skills because they are basic skills necessary both for everyday life and employability (Donina,2014). Soft skills can also be called "applied skills" or "21st-century skills" (Gewertz, 2007). Soft skills are generally described as abilities that how people interact with others, such as communication skills, negotiation, change adeptness, flexibility, team work, relationship building and listening skills (Chaudhry et al, 2008). James and james (2004 cited in Geana, 2008) agreed that soft skills are a new way to describe a set of abilities or talents that an individual can bring to the workplace.

James & Baldock (2004,p.18) defined soft skills generally as "those attributes that enable effective teamwork, communication, presentation, leaderships, customer services and innovative problem solving. Thereby, soft skills are character traits that enhance a person's interactions, job performance, and career prospects (Parsons, 2008). Marcel (2012) declared that soft skills are character traits, attitudes, and behaviors rather than technical aptitude or knowledge. Moreover he emphasized that soft skills are the intangible, nontechnical, personality-specific skills that determine one's strengths as a leader, facilitator, mediator, and negotiator.

Soft skills versus hard skills

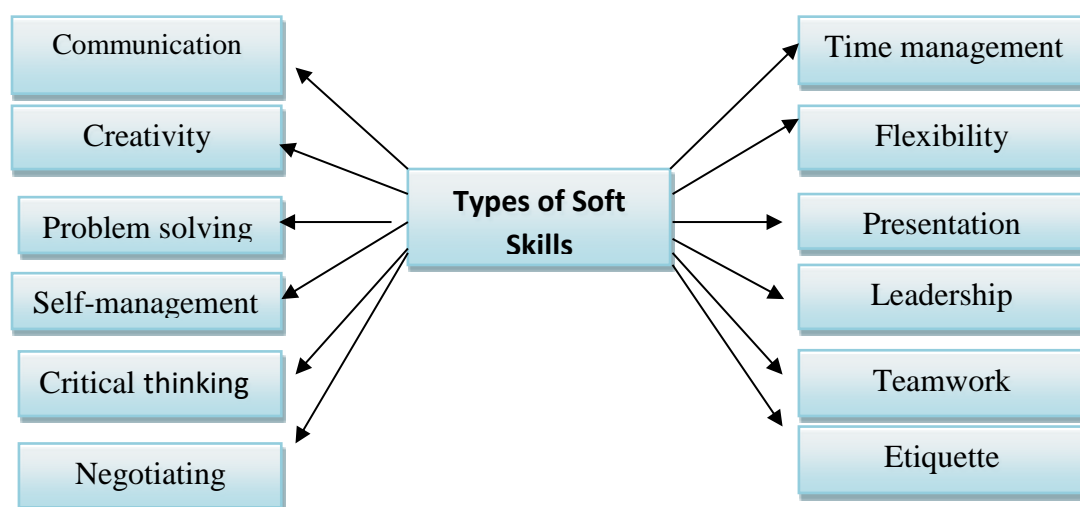
Both hard and soft skills must complement one another for success in the workplace (Marcel, 2012). Soft skills are interpersonal qualities, also known as people skills. Business executives consider soft skills a very important attribute in job applicants. Whereas hard skills are the technical expertise and knowledge needed for a job (Robles, 2012). In this Concern, Schulz (2008, p.146) defined it as "the technical requirements of a job the student is trained to do". Moreover, hard skills defined as "techniques and essential know-how necessary to operate specific professions which can be quantified and measured". On the contrary, soft skills are skills which facilitate the relationship building between individual and working community. Hard skills can be acquired explicitly through learning and training; while, soft skills are naturally developed through personal experience and reflection (Rongraung, 2014, p. 957). Hard skills refer to the skills in the technical and administrative categories, however, soft skills refer to the skills in the human, conceptual, leadership, and interpersonal categories (Weber et al, 2013). Hard skills are those achievements that are included on a résumé, such as education, work experience, knowledge, and level of expertise. (Marcel, 2012).

Types of Soft Skills

According to many researches (Caruana and Mcpherson, 2015 .; Mangano, 2014., Donina, 2014.; Zhang, 2012.; Schulz,2008.; Lowden et al,2011), soft skills types are various competencies including; Communication skills, Presentation skills, Critical and structured thinking, Etiquette and good manners, Problem solving skills, Creativity, Teamwork capability, Negotiating skills, Self-management, Time management, Responsibility, Work ethic, Knowledge of the Business, ICT knowledge, Leadership skills where necessary, information management skills, Analytical skills, Organizational skills, Flexibility.

Weber, et al, (2009) considered these communication and interactive skills, problem solving skills, and behavioral abilities which are necessary in order to apply pedagogical skills and knowledge at a workplace. Students of tourism colleges should be able to demonstrate good communication and presentation skills, think critically and acquire the necessary skills in their respective fields (Chan, 2011). Business executives consider soft skills a very important attribute in job applicants (Robles, 2012).

Figuer.1.Types of Soft Skills



The most valuable soft skills considered by the tourism industry can be represented in: skills to deal effectively with customers' problems, operate effectively and calmly in crisis situations, languages skills, and maintain professional and ethical standards in the work environment. (Donina, 2014; Raybould and Wilkins, 2005). Moreover, the most desired soft skills in the tourism field include: teamwork, communication skills, guest service skills, professional appearance, understanding of industry expectations, pride in self and preferring to work with people over completing administrative tasks (Nagarjuna and Tomy, 2014.; Tesone and Ricci, 2005).

Importance of Soft Skills for Undergraduate Students

The importance of developing soft skills of undergraduate students should be the priority of all the Higher Educational Institutions. Therefore, it is essential to enhance the knowledge and soft skill levels of their students (Chiu et al, 2016). The first step in improving soft skills of students is to raise their awareness about the importance of soft skills and the consequences of shortcomings in this regard (Schulz,2008). Soft skills play an important role in shaping an individual's personality. Hence, it is importance for every student to acquire adequate skills beyond academic or technical knowledge (Schulz,2008). Furthermore, soft skills build self-esteem and self-confidence that enable personal and professional advancement (Raw,2010).

According to Hang and Ronald, (2015). Soft skills account for as much as 70%-85% of an individual's success, whereas hard skills contribute only for the remaining 15%-30%. In this regard, Klaus (2010) found that 75% of long-term job success depends on soft skills, while only 25% is dependent on hard skills. Another study indicated that 85% of success is due to soft skills, whereas hard skills contribute only 15% to one's success, (Watts and Watts,2008., John, 2009). Kaipa et al, (2005) listed leadership, decision making, communication skills, creativity and others soft skills as being essential for entrepreneurial success and maximizing human capital in organizations.

Tourism Employers today look for soft skills of the employees rather than on a college certificate. Innovation skills are essential for effective problem solving in our increasingly complex global business environment (Qiumei, 2007). Computer and language skills, team working and leadership, and tourism and hospitality knowledge and skills have major outcome on tourism career success (Lertwannawit et al, 2009).

Cobanoglu et al, (2006) concluded that soft skills are among the most important skills in the job requirements for tourism and hotels carrier; Communication was the most important, followed by critical thinking, and then the knowledge of information technology. Mitchell et al. (2010) found ethics and general communication skills as extremely important, with 57% stressing written communication and 56% indicating time management and organization skills as extremely important.

Moreover, a recent study has revealed that soft skills rather than technical skills are often valued more by new employers. The results of this study indicated that the following skills are those most valued by the employers in this survey; Organizational skills (87%), Verbal communication (81%), Teamwork and collaboration (78%), Problem solving (60%), Tact and diplomacy (59%), Business writing (48%), Analytical skills (45%). (Abbas,2013,p.33).

The Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia has developed a modal of soft skills to be the reference for public universities to design a program to encompass the criteria it has stipulated. These soft skills are leadership skills, thinking and problem solving skills, lifelong learning, entrepreneurship skills, professional ethic, team work skills and communication skills. (MOHE, 2006,p 9; Nikitina and Furuoka, 2010; Devadason

et al, 2010; Ngang, 201; Abbas,2013). A study done in 2004 in Malaysian found that unemployment problem largely due to the weakness in soft skills among graduates themselves and another study done in 2005 found that unemployed graduates are largely depend on academic qualifications to get a job but with less non technical skills of soft skills required by employers. (Abbas, 2013).

Methods of developing Student's Soft Skills

According to Shakir (2009), soft skills can be introduced to students of the higher educational Institutions through many methods such as; stand-alone subject, embedding it in existing courses, support programs, campus life (debates, drama competition, sports carnival, singing competitions, formal activities (seminars, workshops, and conferences), and informal activities(activities during weekends for social activities such as visits to shelter homes, games between departments), through Practical/industrial training. Moreover, soft skills could be developed to the students through formal teaching and learning, various support programs, and activities organized by the students (MOHE, 2006). In the context, the formal teaching and learning of soft skills can be either embedded in the curricula or be taught through “stand-alone subjects”, such as Entrepreneurship, Public Speaking, Critical Thinking, etc. The support programs for soft skills development can be either academic (e.g., team projects, field trips) or nonacademic (e.g., cultural, sports, and charity events). (Nikitina and Furuoka, 2010)

The methods or approaches to the learning and Improving soft skills of students can take place in several ways include lectures, tutorials, student centered learning, case studies, projects, laboratory sessions. Forums, presentation sessions and social activities. (Chan,2011., Al-Sadat et al, 2011., Geana, 2008). Besides there are other methods such as; courses, workshops, seminars, training programs, Practical activity and applications, student's activity.....etc.

Cimatti (2015) suggested some tools to teach and to improve soft skills for students of the higher educational Institutions such as seminars, workshops, Laboratories, work teams, case study, simulations, project works, and presentations from the students. The enhancing of soft skills at higher learning institutions can be achieved by training through the teaching and learning process, which is academically-based and done at programs, course or subject levels. The academically-based soft skills training can be embedded into the existing subjects or taught as stand-alone subjects (Chan,2011). Consequently, the first and main methods of improving soft skills of students in tourism colleges are the lectures and courses. Students participating in a lecture with the aim of learning hard skills will inevitably and unconsciously practice a range of soft skills. This comes very close to an ideal way of lecturing (Schulz, 2008).

Methodology

Research Population and Sample

The main purpose of this study is to explore the role of faculties of tourism and hotels in developing soft skills for their students. To achieve the purpose and objectives of this research, a quantitative approach was used. The study targeted the population of final year students and academic staff members. Two questionnaires were designed targeting a sample of the study population at four tourism and hotels faculties in Egypt. Both online and offline questionnaires were employed at this study to reach out the target sample during the period from March to April 2017. A total of 295 questionnaires were collected from students at the sampled faculties which was accounted for 25 % of total number of registered students in the final academic year at

these four faculties. Also, out of 225 staff members 93 answered this study questionnaire with a response rate of 40.3%. In total, this sample group consisted of a total of 388 respondents: 76% students and 24% faculty staff. Table (1) showed the distribution of the sample.

Table 1: Profile of Sampled respondents

| University | Staff members | | Students | |
|------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------|
| | Total staff members | No of participants | Total 4 th year students | No of participants |
| Minia Uni | 43 | 20 | 400 | 99 |
| Helwan Uni | 70 | 23 | 480 | 121 |
| Fayoum Uni | 51 | 24 | 122 | 34 |
| Sadat Uni | 61 | 26 | 161 | 41 |
| Total | 225 | 93 | 1163 | 295 |

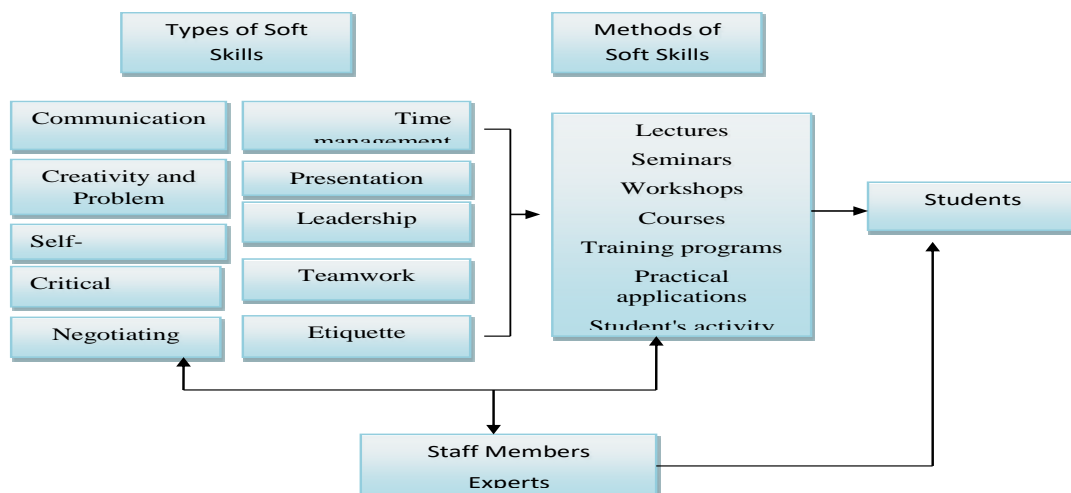
Survey Instrument

Based on literature review, a study model is proposed to evaluate the role of tourism facilities through a specific set of ten soft skills as well as the most popular methods for developing Soft Skills (Figure 2). Accordingly, the survey tool is designed to cover four main study dimensions including: Perception of Soft Skills Importance, Faculty's Encouragement, Types of Soft Skills, and Practiced Methods for Soft Skills Development. This study questionnaire that directed to students consisted of 25 statements that measure the four main dimensions of this study, in addition to an open question. Similarly, the questionnaire targeted faculty staff members consisted of the same statements that measure the study dimensions and additional 4 statements for studying the obstacles that face soft skills development. The five- point Likert scale was used to measure the sample opinions for each statement.

Primary Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS version 22). Descriptive as well as inferential statistical methods were used. A detailed description of study sample and scale reliability and validity testing were given. Also, the correlations test was used to examine the relationship between this study's dimensions. Moreover, Kruskal-Wallis χ^2 and Mann-Whitney U-test were used to compare between the responses of the two target samples of this current study.

Figure 2: The Proposed Study Model



Results

As a preliminary step, it is important to examine the reliability of the proposed study model as well as to test the correlation between the study dimensions. The Cronbach alpha was calculated to examine the internal consistency reliability of the scale developed for this current study. In general, a scale's dimensions are to be reliable when it achieves value (α) over 0.7 (Bozorgy, 2007). Accordingly, it is clear that the proposed scale was reliable and valid for this study's purpose, since the overall α was 0.945 (Table). The coefficients of Cronbach's Alpha for all scale's dimensions ranging from 0.819 to 0.931 indicated good internal consistency meaning that the associations among the study variables were reliable for further analysis. Details for all dimensions' values of Cronbach's alpha are provided in table (2).

Table 2: The internal reliability of the study dimensions

| Dimension | No. of Items | Cronbach's alpha |
|---|--------------|------------------|
| Perception of Soft Skills Importance | 4 | 0.879 |
| Faculty's Encouragement | 3 | 0.819 |
| Types of Soft Skills | 10 | 0.931 |
| Practiced Methods for Soft Skills Development | 7 | 0.894 |
| Overall Scale | 24 | 0.945 |

To examine the correlation between pairs of this study variables, The Pearson Correlation was used. The correlation coefficients (Table 3) showed that there is a statistically significant moderate to strong positive relationship between each pair of the study dimensions. Table (4) revealed that the positive correlations coefficients between each pair of variables can be arranged descendingly as follows:

- The "Types of Soft Skills" and "Practiced Methods for Soft Skills Development" variables ($r = -0.732, p = 0.000$) (Strong relationship);
- The "Faculty's Encouragement" and "practiced Methods for Soft Skills Development" variables ($r = -0.727, p = 0.000$) (Strong relationship);
- The "Faculty's Encouragement" and "Types of Soft Skills" variables ($r = 0.683, p = 0.000$) (Strong relationship);
- The "Perception of Soft Skills Importance" and "Practiced Methods for Soft Skills Development" variables ($r = 0.388, p = 0.000$) (Moderate relationship);
- The "Perception of Soft Skills Importance" and "Faculty's Encouragement" variables ($r = 0.357, p = 0.000$) (Moderate relationship);
- The "Perception of Soft Skills Importance" and "Types of Soft Skills" variables ($r = 0.355, p = 0.000$) (Moderate relationship);

Table 3: Correlations between the total scores of the questioned dimensions

| Variables | | Perception of Soft Skills Importance | Faculty's Encouragement | Types of Soft Skills |
|---|-----------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Faculty's Encouragement | <i>r</i> | 0.357** | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.000 | | |
| | N | 388 | | |
| Types of Soft Skills | <i>r</i> | 0.355** | 0.683** | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.000 | 0.000 | |
| | N | 388 | 388 | |
| Practiced Methods for Soft Skills Development | <i>r</i> | 0.388** | 0.727** | 0.732** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| | N | 388 | 388 | 388 |

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As per the above stated results, this study's variables are precisely related and affect each other positively meaning that these variables are still valid to realize the study objectives. In the following section of the study, results were showed separately for students and faculty staff members who answered the study questionnaire. That they had been treated as two independent samples.

Students' Opinions Results

The sampled students group consisted of a total of 295 participants: 43% males and 57% females. Most of students that participated in this survey were from Helwan University (37%) and Minia university (31%) as shown in table 4.

Table 4: Profile of Sampled Students

| Variables | | N | % |
|------------|------------|-----|------|
| Gender | Male | 127 | 43 |
| | Female | 168 | 57 |
| | Total | 295 | 100 |
| University | Minia | 99 | 33.6 |
| | Sadat city | 41 | 13.9 |
| | Helwan | 121 | 41 |
| | Fayoum | 34 | 11.5 |
| | Total | 295 | 100 |

Descriptive permeates of students' opinions on Soft Skills Development

The mean rank of all statements that measure students' perception of soft skills importance ranged from 3.04 to 3.72 (Table 5). This referred that students have a moderate degree of the awareness soft skills concept and its importance in developing personal skills and success.

Table 5: Students' perception of soft skills Importance

| Statements | Mean | SD |
|---|------|-------|
| I am aware of the importance of soft skills and their role in developing personal skills and success in life and work | 3.68 | 1.315 |
| I am aware of the concept of soft skills | 3.38 | 1.293 |
| I distinguish between types of soft skills | 3.19 | 1.210 |
| I have aware of the methods of teaching and developing soft skills | 3.04 | 1.151 |
| Total | 3.32 | 1.059 |

The results of table 6 indicated that students see that their faculties were encouraging them develop their soft skills as moderately where the mean values of response on this dimension ranked from 2.90 to 2.94.

Table 6: Faculty's Encouragement of students to develop their soft skills

| Statements | Mean | SD |
|---|--------|---------|
| The faculty encourages students to develop their personal skills | 2.94 | 1.395 |
| The faculty offers clear and announced programs to develop students' personal skills (eg training courses, seminars, workshops, etc.) | 2.93 | 1.408 |
| spreading awareness of the soft skills importance to students | 2.90 | 1.283 |
| Total | 2.9232 | 1.16971 |

As for soft skills types that faculties seek to develop among students, the results showed that the highest mean score of soft skills types were the teamwork skills at 3.41, followed by the effective presentation skills at 3.20, and the effective

communication skills at 3.15. The lowest mean score of soft skills types were the time management skills at 2.62, critical thinking and analysis skills at 2.76, and leadership skills at 2.86 (Table 7).

Table 7: Types of soft skills that faculties seek to develop among students

| Statements | Mean | SD | Rank |
|---|------|-------|------|
| The faculty develops the team work skills for students | 3.41 | 1.282 | 1 |
| The faculty develops effective presentation skills for students | 3.20 | 1.274 | 2 |
| The faculty develops the effective communication skills for students | 3.15 | 1.190 | 3 |
| The faculty develops the etiquette and behavior skills of students | 2.98 | 1.202 | 4 |
| The faculty develops self-confidence and self-development skills | 2.95 | 1.269 | 5 |
| The faculty develops the negotiation skills of students | 2.90 | 1.131 | 6 |
| The faculty develops the students' innovation and problem-solving skills | 2.90 | 1.187 | 7 |
| The faculty develops the leadership skills of students | 2.86 | 1.190 | 8 |
| The faculty develops the critical thinking and analysis skills among students | 2.76 | 1.164 | 9 |
| The faculty develops the time management skills of students | 2.62 | 1.269 | 10 |

Table 8 showed the methods that were used by the faculties to develop students' soft skills. The results revealed that the most practiced methods were: lectures (M= 3.27), followed by the courses (such as etiquette and protocol, communication and public relations) (M= 3.23), and presentations of students (M= 3.19). The lowest mean score of practiced methods of soft skills were training programs organized by the faculty (M= 2.64), followed by the practical applications for students (M= 2.89), seminars and workshops (M= 2.98), and participation in the student's activities (M= 3.17).

Table 8: Practiced Methods for Soft Skills Development

| Statements | Mean | SD | Rank |
|---|------|-------|------|
| Through lectures (directly or indirectly by staff members) | 3.27 | 1.218 | 1 |
| Through courses (such as etiquette and protocol, communication and public relations.... etc.) | 3.23 | 1.316 | 2 |
| Through presentations of students | 3.19 | 1.275 | 3 |
| Through participation in the students and community activities | 3.17 | 1.219 | 4 |
| Through seminars and workshops | 2.98 | 1.211 | 5 |
| Through practical applications for students | 2.89 | 1.351 | 6 |
| Through the training programs organized by the faculty | 2.64 | 1.332 | 7 |

Differences in student's opinions on the basis of their university location

To examine whether answers of research participant students were normally distributed or not, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (significance level of 0.05) was used. The results of this test indicated that data were not normally distributed and therefore the non-parametric tests should be used in further analytical tests. The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to explore the differences in the views of the sampled students in the four chosen faculties towards the main dimensions of this current study. The results indicated that there was no significant difference among students for the dimension that measure students' perception of soft skills importance (p.value 0.394 > 0.05). However, there was a statistically significant difference among the students belonging to the four chosen faculties for the other three dimensions. The P value of the three dimensions were valued between 0.000 and 0.001 (P.value < 0.05) as illustrated in table 9.

Table 9: Differences in student's opinions based on their university location

| Dimensions | Mean Rank (four chosen faculties) | | | | Chi-Square | df | Asymp. Sig (p-value) |
|---|--------------------------------------|------------|--------|--------|------------|----|-------------------------|
| | Minia | Sadat City | Helwan | Fayoum | | | |
| Perception of Soft Skills Importance | 157.81 | 138.63 | 140.85 | 156.16 | 2.982 | 3 | 0.394 |
| Faculty's Encouragement | 142.47 | 143.26 | 135.80 | 213.24 | 23.136 | 3 | 0.000 |
| Types of Soft Skills | 119.32 | 142.32 | 156.46 | 207.60 | 29.269 | 3 | 0.000 |
| Practiced Methods for Soft Skills Development | 130.36 | 145.88 | 149.33 | 197.19 | 15.630 | 3 | 0.001 |

Faculty Staff's Opinions Results

The sampled Faculty staff group consisted of a total of 93 participants: 69% lecturers, 18% assistant-professors, and 13% professors. Most of faculty staff who participated in this survey was almost equally distributed among the four chosen faculties as shown in table 10.

Table10: Job and University of Sampled Staff Members

| Variables | | N | % |
|------------|----------------|----|------|
| Job | Professor | 12 | 12.9 |
| | Assistant Prof | 17 | 18.3 |
| | Lecturer | 64 | 68.8 |
| | Total | 93 | 100 |
| University | Minia | 20 | 21.5 |
| | Sadat City | 26 | 28 |
| | Helwan | 23 | 24.7 |
| | Fayoum | 24 | 25.8 |
| | Total | 93 | 100 |

Descriptive permeates of faculty staff's opinions on Soft Skills Development

It can be seen from Table 11 that the mean rank of the statements that evaluate faculty staff's perception of soft skills importance ranged from 3.58 to 4.13. This means that sampled staff members have a high level of awareness of soft skills concept and its importance in developing personal skills and success for students.

Table 11: Staff member's perception of soft skills importance

| Statements | Mean | SD |
|---|--------|---------|
| I am aware of the importance of soft skills and their role in developing personal skills and success in life and work | 4.1398 | .90399 |
| I am aware of the concept of soft skills | 4.0215 | .94384 |
| I distinguish between types of soft skills | 3.6559 | 1.00536 |
| I have aware of the methods of teaching and developing soft skills | 3.5806 | .88861 |
| Total | 3.8495 | 0.79583 |

Faculty staff members reported that they give a high level of attention to the encouragement of students to develop their soft skills where the mean values of response on this dimension ranked from 3.37 to 4.31 as shown in table 12.

Table 12: Faculty's Encouragement of students to develop their soft skills

| Statements | Mean | SD |
|--|--------|---------|
| I encourage students to develop their personal skills | 4.3118 | .75150 |
| I spread awareness of the soft skills importance to students | 3.5269 | 1.08939 |
| I offer clear and announced programs to develop students' personal skills (e.g. training courses, seminars, workshops, etc.) | 3.3763 | 1.17874 |
| Total | 3.738 | 0.8411 |

With respect to the soft skills types that faculties seek to develop among students according to staff members' views, the results in table 13 revealed that the highest mean score of soft skills types were effective presentation skills at 4.07, followed by etiquette and behavior skills at 3.90, and the team work skills at 3.84. The lowest mean score of soft skills types were the leadership skills at 3.36, time management skills at 3.41, and negotiation skills at 3.61.

Table 13: Types of soft skills that faculties seek to develop among students

| Statements | Mean | SD | Rank |
|---|--------|---------|------|
| The faculty develops effective presentation skills for students | 4.0753 | .91172 | 1 |
| The faculty develops the etiquette and behavior skills of students | 3.9032 | .95627 | 2 |
| The faculty develops the team work skills for students | 3.8495 | .92014 | 3 |
| The faculty develops the effective communication skills for students | 3.8189 | .97563 | 4 |
| The faculty develops self-confidence and self-development skills | 3.7957 | 1.04839 | 5 |
| The faculty develops the students' innovation and problem-solving skills | 3.7097 | .96212 | 6 |
| The faculty develops the critical thinking and analysis skills among students | 3.6129 | 1.04291 | 7 |
| The faculty develops the negotiation skills of students | 3.4624 | 1.17547 | 8 |
| The faculty develops the time management skills of students | 3.4194 | 1.19166 | 9 |
| The faculty develops the leadership skills of students | 3.3656 | 1.07121 | 10 |

Table 14 illustrated that the most methods that are used by the faculties to develop students' soft skills were; lectures (M= 4.06), followed by presentations of students (M= 4.05), and courses (such as etiquette and protocol, communication and public relations.... etc.) (M= 3.89). The lowest mean score of soft skills methods were training programs organized by the faculty at 3.18, followed by seminars and workshops at 3.35, seminars and workshops at 2.98 and participation in the student's activity at 3.77.

Table 14: Practiced Methods for Soft Skills Development

| Statements | Mean | SD | Rank |
|---|--------|---------|------|
| Through lectures (directly or indirectly by staff members) | 4.0645 | .74901 | 1 |
| Through presentations of students | 4.0538 | 1.13603 | 2 |
| Through courses (such as etiquette and protocol, communication and public relations.... etc.) | 3.8925 | 1.11767 | 3 |

| | | | |
|--|--------|---------|---|
| Through participation in the students and community activities | 3.8172 | 1.07285 | 4 |
| Through practical applications for students | 3.7742 | 1.14331 | 5 |
| Through seminars and workshops | 3.3548 | 1.03887 | 6 |
| Through the training programs organized by the faculty | 3.1828 | .98848 | 7 |

Differences in staff members' opinions on the basis of their university location

As said before, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (significance level of 0.05) indicated that data were not normally distributed and therefore the non-parametric tests should be used in further analytical tests. The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to explore the differences in the views of the sampled faculty staff members in the four chosen faculties towards the main dimensions of this current study. The results indicated that there was no significant difference among staff members for the four dimensions of this present study as illustrated in table 15.

Table 15: Differences in Staff members' opinions based on university location

| Dimensions | Mean Rank (four chosen faculties) | | | | Chi-Square | df | Asymp. Sig |
|---|--------------------------------------|------------|--------|--------|------------|----|------------|
| | Minia | Sadat City | Helwan | Fayoum | | | |
| Perception of Soft Skills Importance | 44.32 | 45.55 | 50.56 | 47.76 | 0.738 | 3 | 0.864 |
| Faculty's Encouragement | 44.12 | 46.26 | 53.91 | 42.87 | 2.249 | 3 | 0.522 |
| Types of Soft Skills | 49.85 | 44.58 | 42.4 | 53.95 | 2.151 | 3 | 0.473 |
| Practiced Methods for Soft Skills Development | 52.05 | 38.84 | 43.61 | 59.11 | 7.780 | 3 | 0.490 |

Differences in views between staff members and students

The Mann-Whitney test was used to examine the differences in views between staff members and students towards the study dimensions. The results explained that there were statistically significant differences between the two views for the four study dimensions where p.value for the four dimensions valued at 0.000 (P.value < 0.05). Mean rank was used to determine the direction of the differences for either category. The mean rank of staff members' views was higher than the mean rank of students views of all dimensions of the study as in table 15.

Table 15: Differences in views between staff members and students

| Dimensions | Mean Rank | | Mann-Whitney U | Wilcoxon W | Z | Asymp. Sig (2-tailed) (P-value) |
|---|---------------|----------|----------------|------------|--------|---------------------------------|
| | Staff members | students | | | | |
| Perception of Soft Skills Importance | 235.95 | 181.43 | 9.863 | 5.352 | -4.097 | 0.000 |
| Faculty's Encouragement | 255.30 | 175.33 | 8.064 | 5.172 | -6.020 | 0.000 |
| Types of Soft Skills | 257.78 | 174.55 | 7.832 | 5.149 | -6.246 | 0.000 |
| Practiced Methods for Soft Skills Development | 254.15 | 175.69 | 8.170 | 5.183 | -5.889 | 0.000 |

Respondents' views on the obstacles and suggestions for developing students' soft skills

Answers of staff members and students on additional questions regarding the obstacles and suggestions for developing soft skill for students revealed that the most serious obstacles are as follows:

- There are no clear policies and programs in the faculty administration about developing soft skills for students;
- Students are not interested of soft skills;
- Some faculty staff give attention to basic technical skills (hard skills) of the courses rather than soft skills;
- There is not enough time to develop students' soft skills;
- The regulations do not dedicate courses for soft skills development.

On the other hand, the respondents suggested the following to develop soft skills for students:

- Increase students' activities and encourage students to participate in;
- Conduct training programs on soft skills development;
- Increase the role of staff members in developing soft skill for students through lectures and practical applications.

Discussions and Conclusion

Soft skills play an important role in shaping an individual's personality. It is of high importance for every student to acquire adequate skills beyond academic or professional knowledge. The findings showed that there was a statistically significant moderate to strong positive relationship between each pair of the study dimensions. The high relationships (Strong relationship) were between the dimensions of "Types of Soft Skills" and "Practiced Methods for Soft Skills Development", then between the dimensions of "Faculty's Encouragement" and "practiced Methods for Soft Skills Development". These findings revealed that the study's variables are precisely related and affect each other positively to the extent that helps in the evaluation of respondents' opinions towards the study dimensions.

The students' perception of soft skills concept and its importance in developing personal skills and success was moderate but staff member's perception of the same was higher. This result was in line with previous studies (ahmed, 2013.; Kalauz et al, 2015), which found that perceptions of soft skills are affected in both developing soft skills and success for their future work engagements. Students showed that the faculties were encouraging them to develop their soft skills as moderately. Otherwise, staff members reported that they give a high level to the encouragement for students to develop their soft skills. Both staff members and students agreed in the most types of soft skills that faculties seek to develop among students including: teamwork skills, effective presentation skills and effective communication and etiquette. On the other hand, the lowest soft skills types were; time management skills, critical thinking and analysis skills, leadership skills and negotiation skills. This was consistent with the results of some previous studies (Nikitina and Furuoka, 2012.; ahmed, 2013.; Kalauz et al, 2015).

Both staff members and students agreed in the most methods that were used by the faculties to develop students' soft skills including: lectures, courses, and presentations of students. This was agreed with the results of the study conducted by Nikitina and Furuoka (2012), who indicated that lectures and courses were effective in helping students to learn and develop their soft skills. In contrast, the lowest used methods

were: training programs followed by practical applications, seminars and workshops, and participation in the student's activities.

Furthermore, the study found that the most serious obstacles for developing students' soft skill were: lack of clear policies and programs in the faculty administration about developing soft skills for students. Also, among these obstacles, the absence of interest of students in developing their soft skills. Additionally, some staff members give more attention to basic technical skills (hard skills) than soft skills.

This study presented few results that are useful for the faculties and staff members to better develop soft skills for students. The faculties of tourism and hotels should increase their role in developing soft skills for students through diversification of soft skills using a variety of methods. The faculties' administration should offer clear policies and programs such as training programs, seminars and workshops, embodying soft skills courses in curriculums, and increasing the level of students' activities encouraging them to participate in. Moreover, staff members can increase their role in developing soft skills for students through: giving attention to both basic technical skills (hard skills) and soft skills, raising the awareness of soft skills importance during lectures, and other academic activities, and encouraging students to participate in the student's activities.

As a final note, the contribution of this study is attributed to its research topic, which is very important for improving the quality of tourism education outcomes. This study contributes to tourism literature in the Egyptian context. However, this research should be extended to design detailed training programs and probably course syllabus for students' soft skills development. Also, an assessment tool should be studied for measuring the progress of students' soft skills and the effectiveness of such training programs.

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