

The Psychological Contributions of Natural Site Experiences in Kastamonu, Turkey

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ABSTRACT. The present paper was carried out on 47 nature lover participants from different cities in Turkey that were brought together within the framework of the Nature Training Project and whose demographic backgrounds (age, education level, profession, income level, gender) were completely different from one another and who did not know one another previously. The participants were trained for one week by a number of expert trainers about nature on both theoretical and applied levels at the Pinarbasi district of Kastamonu. They were taken to the difficult-to-access untouched areas, where different geological formations can be found, to areas full of historic structures, waterfalls, canyons, caves, and national parks, and were informed about these areas and their flora and fauna. They were asked to listen to the natural sounds (wind, birds, water, leaves, etc.), to smell the soil and plants and to perceive different colors in nature. It was aimed to identify the changes in the moods of these people as well as the characteristics of nature that resulted in these changes. Besides, the present paper aims to determine which activities these people enjoyed the most in natural sites. The obtained results informed that natural site experiences had a positive impact on the participants, and helped them gain awareness, release stress, and achieve a more positive state of mind.

INTRODUCTION

For modern people, it is important to make use of nature, especially green spaces. Naturalness-nature, which is the source of life, is a concept that is intrinsic to the human existence. A number of scholars, such as Ulrich (1984, 1992), Kaplan and Kaplan (1989), Lewis (1990, 1994) and others have clearly accepted the importance of being in the vicinity of natural sites for the human psychological health. As a result of people's detachment from natural sites and atrophy of their affinity to nature, metropolitan residents seem to be deprived of their natural behavioral patterns and have been accustomed to living in a more aggressive, unhappier, and inwardly oriented manner. Nevertheless, to observe nature and to commune actively or passively with nature decreases the daily stress levels of metropolitan residents (Feda et al. 2014; Jiang et al. 2014; Reklaitiene et al. 2014; Roe et al. 2013; Lee et al. 2011; Dallimer et al. 2012).

Natural sites, plenty of sunshine, and fresh air give the opportunity to move freely and help form a healthier, more-balanced, regenerative, and nourishing environment for the society as well as for self (Wolch et al. 2014; Bowler et al. 2010). In addition, it has a soothing and relaxing effect

on people (Gifford 2014; Roe et al. 2013; Cummins and Jackson 2001; Smardon 1990). To many people, nature means an environment, which gives health and healing (Brymer et al. 2014; Thompson et al. 2012; Roe and Aspinoll 2011). The nature is a source of nutrition in terms of gaining experiences, perceiving physical surroundings, and comprehension (Saribas et al. 2007; Bekci et al. 2012; Bekci and Taskan 2013).

The fact that spending time in natural sites contributes positively to the people's states of mind and this fact has been experienced as well as conceptually supported by many scholarly studies (Brymer et al. 2014; Roe and Aspinall 2011; Kaplan and Kaplan 1989; Varni et al. 1996; Whitehouse et al. 2001). Ulrich has a number of studies clearly showing that people have more positive feelings towards their environment when they are exposed more frequently to the nature (Wolch et al. 2014; Ulrich 1981, 1984, 1992, 2000). Nature offers a huge number of opportunities regarding relaxation, richness, spirituality, relationships, joy, and play. It helps increase positive feelings such as those related to peace, hope, fun, reflection, consolation, and comfort. Natural views such as those of trees, green areas, grass, water, cloudless skies, rocks, flowers, and birds are elements with immensely pos-

itive impacts on people (Jiang et al. 2014; Olds 1989). The positive effect of the environment on people in natural sites can be summarized as follows: Natural environments (*I*) create distance from a stressful city life when sufficient time is spent in natural environments (being away), (*II*) help stimulate their will to probe further into and discover new ideas as the natural environment addresses the intellectual and physical senses (extent), (*III*) appeal to the senses, therefore, increases interest and concentration (fascination), (*IV*) may meet personal needs (compatibility) (Jernberg 2001; Relf 1992; Kaplan 1992).

- Within the framework of this paper, nature lovers from different cities in Turkey, who did not know one another previously and whose demographic backgrounds were completely different from one another were taken to the difficult-to-access untouched areas, where different geological formations can be found, to areas full of historic structures, to waterfalls, canyons, caves, and national parks to spend one full week to investigate the effect of nature on people and to seek whether the positive effects of nature display differences on people who have different demographic backgrounds
- To this end, it was aimed to identify the changes in the moods of these people, who spent time in a natural environment in the Pınarbaşı district of the city of Kastamonu, as well as the characteristics of nature that resulted in these changes.
- The other prime objective of the paper was to determine which activities these people enjoyed as the most unnatural sites.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Study Area

The study was conducted on 47 people coming from different cities in Turkey, who spent time in a natural environment in the Pınarbaşı, a district of Kastamonu for one week. While determining the study field, it was considered to choose a place which has special natural environments with different resource values in Kastamonu showcasing different geological features, having scenes of water, providing natural sounds for rest (wind, water, leaves, etc...), showing historic structures, having different vegetation types (flora) and wildlife (fauna), showing natural beauty features, having untouched areas (difficult-to-access intact areas), giving the sense of multiple sensory stimulation, and providing the feel of sunlight and breeze).

These people, who had never been to this area before, were taken to Ilica waterfalls, Valla Canyon, Ilgarini Cave, Mantar Cave, Çatak Canyon, Horma Canyon, Eflani (artificial lake), Ardiçdüzü Plateau, Safranbolu (historic houses), Pasha Mansion, Kure Mountain National Park and other nearby natural sites and were informed about the values of these resources and were given the opportunity to do open-air activities. The subject group stayed in 14 bungalows, 5 of which were two-story houses, while the other 9 were one-story, for one week. They were allowed to go to the downtown every other day to use the telephone and the Internet. It was aimed to isolate the participants from their daily lives as much as possible and to help them relate to the nature. The study area can be seen in Figure 1.

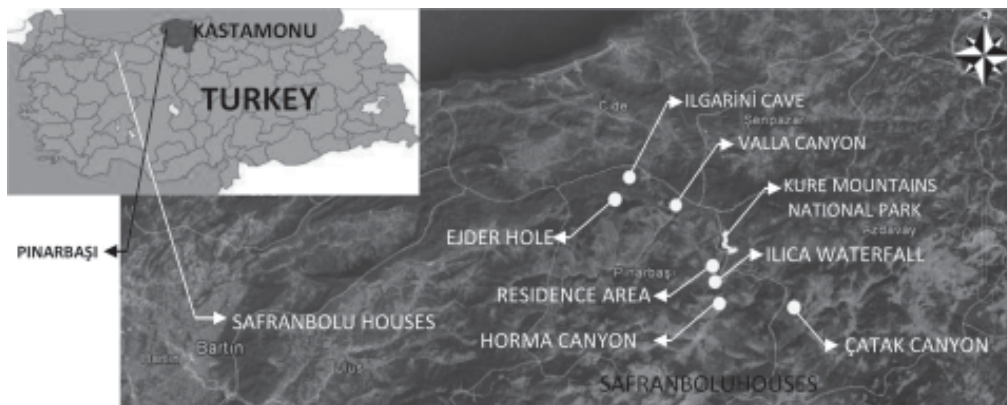


Fig. 1. Location of the study sites

Ilica Waterfall

This waterfall is located 500 meters away from the residential area. It can be accessed by walking in nature. The waterfall is 15 meters high, with a natural pool where the water pours and a variety of vegetation around the pool (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Ilica Waterfall

The Valla Canyon is a natural formation that lies 26 kilometers north of Pinarbasi district of the city of Kastamonu, and extending for 10 km with 800-1200 meters high rocky cliffs, where birds of prey such as eagles, hawks, and vultures nest. As inside the canyon can be explored only by professional groups and using special equipment, the subject group could only take short glances inside the canyon (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Valla Canyon

Ilgarini Cave

This 858-meter-long and 250-meter-deep cave is the fourth largest cave in the world. Inside the cave, one can see one million-year-old stalactites and stalagmites. There are numerous remains and vestiges suggesting that the cave

was used both as a settlement area and a religious space in the past. Based on the construction technique, material properties and structural forms, one can argue that it is either from the late Roman or early Byzantine period. To access the cave, one has to walk through untouched and intact forests and sheer and steep slopes. On the way to the Ilgarini cave, Mantar cave and Ejder hole were also visited. Once more, because the subject group was not composed of professional speleologists, the cave could be visited only at its entrance and was not accessed at a great depth (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4. Ilgarini Cave

Mantar Cave

The cave that is found in the Kazla village of the Pinarbasi district of the city of Kastamonu is 26 meters long. The cave is covered with heavy vegetation and is accessed through a pitch at the end of a 30-minute walk through an intact forest. It is composed of two main spaces in the north and in the south. Inside the space in the south, there are large stalagmites. There is a giant, 4 meter-high mushroom-like rock formation at the center of the cave (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5. Mantar Cave

Catak Canyon

This canyon, surrounded on both sides by high rocky cliffs and forests, is located in the Azdavay district of the Kastamonu province. This approximately 12-kilometer-long canyon exhibits interesting geological formations (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6. Çatak Canyon

Horma Canyon

The canyon, located some 500 meters away from the place where the subject group had

stayed, is 4 kilometers long and is extremely dangerous to attempt to pass through without a guide. Deep holes and wells that were formed along where water flowed make the canyon even more risky. Once more, as there was not a professional team to accompany the subject group, only a small portion of the canyon could be visited (Fig. 7).



Fig. 7. Horma Canyon

Kure Mountains National Park

The park comprises the region extending generally between Cide, Azdavay, and Pinarbasi districts and the eastern part of the Bartın province, in the northwestern part of the city of Kastamonu, an area of over 37,000 hectares. It is covered by a natural, old, and intact forest with national and international importance. It has also a great potential in terms of wildlife. 40 out of a total of 132 mammals in Turkey are found in this area (Fig. 8).



Fig. 8. Kure Mountains National Park

Description of the Survey

The present paper aims to identify the changes in the moods of the participants who were spending time in a natural environment with different resource values in Kastamonu for one week away from their daily routines and to identify the reasons behind these changes. To follow these changes in the states of mind, a questionnaire was used. This technique is a frequently preferred research method, used in the identification of natural areas and designed environments on users, and is utilized by many scholars (Paine and Francis 1990; Marcus and Barnes 1995; Ghose 1999; Whitehouse et al. 2001; Zimring 2002; LaFargue 2004; Sherman et al. 2005; Acar and Sakici 2008; Sakici 2009). The survey was carried out on 47 people taken to the Pinarbasi district of the city of Kastamonu within the context of TUBITAK's Ecology-Based Nature Training in the Kure Mountains National Park Project no 112B162. These 47 participants were divided into two groups (composed of 25 and 22 people) who were taken to a number of natural site activities in the area for one week and then they were asked to complete the questionnaire. The areas gave the users the opportunity to observe resource values especial to the region, such as flora, fauna, natural geological formations and historic structures, to have a multiple-sensory stimulation by perceiving natural colors, fresh air, sun-light, breeze, and the smell of earth, to go trekking in difficult-to-access, untouched, and intact areas, to listen to natural sounds such as rippling sound of water, chirping of birds, wild animals, wind, and leaves, both during the day and the night, to chat and sing around a camp fire at night, to participate in music and dance performances, to collect natural materials, to take photographs, to watch, to sit, and to eat and drink in natural sites.

The questionnaire designed with the aim of identifying the impact of these natural site experiences on the participants was composed of 4 different sections and 14 questions. In the first section, the subjects' demographical backgrounds (age, gender, profession, education, income, and place of origin) were questioned. In the second section (4 questions), on the other hand, they were asked about their experience, such as what was their motivation for participating in this organization, what did they gain from this experience, if they had previously stayed in

a natural environment for at least a week without interruption, and if they had attended all activities during their stay in this area. In the third section (5 questions), to understand the subjects' level of interest in natural sites, they were asked how frequently they had visited natural sites before this experience, together with the motives, what activities did they participate in at the natural sites, how their states of mind were affected after spending time in the lap of nature, and how did they prefer to relax when they felt bored or annoyed. Finally, in the fourth section (5 questions), the subjects were expected to answer questions such as what changes did they observe in their states of mind at the end of period assigned of a week, the characteristics of the nature that helped these changes take place, the natural site activities they enjoyed the most, the area that attracted their attention the most, and the areas' resource values.

The Wilcoxon test was used to uncover if the participants actually comprehended the healing power of nature, if they decided to spend more time at natural sites, and if they apprehended the consciousness to find relief from stress and uneasiness using their experience that they had in nature. In addition, tables and graphics related to frequency and percentage values were used to identify the participants' motives behind participating in this activity, the positive impacts of this activity on the participants, the areas' characteristics that resulted in those positive impacts, and the activities they enjoyed participating in at the natural sites. For the statistical analyses, SPSS for Windows 17.0 package software was used.

RESULTS

Demographic Profile

To identify the changes in the moods of the people who spent time in a natural environment in the Pinarbasi district of the Kastamonu province for a week within the framework of this paper, as well as the characteristics of the nature that resulted in these changes, and which activities did they enjoy the most, 47 people from 21 different cities in Turkey (Ankara, Izmir, Istanbul, Eskisehir, Tunceli, Antalya, Isparta, Malatya, Sakarya, Kutahya, Burdur, Aksaray, Kastamonu, Ordu, Adana, Zonguldak, Mardin, Trabzon, Sivas, Kocaeli, and Mersin) whose demographic

backgrounds were completely different from one another and who did not know one another previously were brought together within the framework of the Nature Training Project. The demographic profiles of the subject group can be seen in Table 1.

Table1: Demographic characteristics of the participants

<i>Demographic factors</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
<i>Gender</i>	Male	27	57.4
	Female	20	42.6
<i>Distribution for Age</i>	15-20	4	8.5
	20-25	18	38.3
	25-30	13	27.7
	30-35	9	19.1
	35-40	1	2.1
	40-45	2	4.3
<i>Distribution for Education Levels</i>	Undergraduate	33	70.2
	Graduate	13	27.7
<i>Distribution for Occupational Groups</i>	Doctorate	1	2.1
	Student	21	44.7
	Trainer	1	2.1
	Designer	1	2.1
	Biologist	1	2.1
	Engineer	3	6.4
	Teacher	14	29.8
	Doctor	1	2.1
	Academic	3	6.4
	Research Associate	1	2.1
	Landscape Architect	1	2.1
<i>Distribution for Income</i>	Low	19	40.4
	Medium	14	29.8
	High	14	29.8

Views of the Participants on Their Nature Experience

In the paper, to elaborate more on their experience in the nature, the participants were also asked to answer the following questions: What was their motivation to participate in this activity? What did they gain from this experience? Have they previously stayed in a natural environment for at least a week without interruption? Did they participate in all of the activities during their stay in this area? The results showed that 38.3% of the participants received a nature training previously; however, none of them had stayed in nature continuously for one week. 89.4% of the 47 people who filled out the questionnaire attended all nature activities that were held within the framework of this project, while

only 5 people could not participate in some of the activities due to the health problems. The majority of the participants reported that they participated in this activity mostly with the intent of becoming more conscious, acquiring environmental awareness, exploring nature, and receiving practical nature training. Figure 9 shows the other motivations reported in the questionnaire, and Figure 10 displays what the participants gained from this experience. The results obtained from the questionnaire clearly suggest that such an experience resulted in 68.1% of the participants to become more sensitive, conscious, and aware of nature.

General Attitudes towards Natural Areas

In the present paper, to measure the subjects' level of interest in natural sites, they were asked to answer how frequently they had visited natural sites before this experience, together with the motives, what activities they participated in at the natural sites, how their states of mind were affected after spending time in nature, and how they preferred to relax when they are bored or annoyed.

Although, the participants were all nature lovers who enjoyed living in relation to nature, when the frequency of their visits to a natural site was investigated, it was seen that those who visited a natural site every day was only in the range of 6%. Participants' frequency to visit a natural site can be seen in Table 2. When their reasons for not being able to visit natural sites more frequently were analyzed, it was seen that 83% reported the lack of time as the chief reason. The other reasons can be seen in Table 2. The results show that 89.4% of the participants feel relaxed and rested after visiting natural sites, while 70.2% reported that they withdraw when they are bored or tired of what they are doing and go out, have some fresh air, have a walk, or play outdoors sports. Other methods to alleviate stress and to relax are seen in Table 2. When the activities in which the participants enjoy being involved in at the natural sites are questioned. In addition, it was observed that 76.6% enjoyed watching and experiencing a natural site, while 57.4% enjoyed listening to the natural sounds. The other activities that the participants enjoy doing in natural sites are summarized in Table 2.

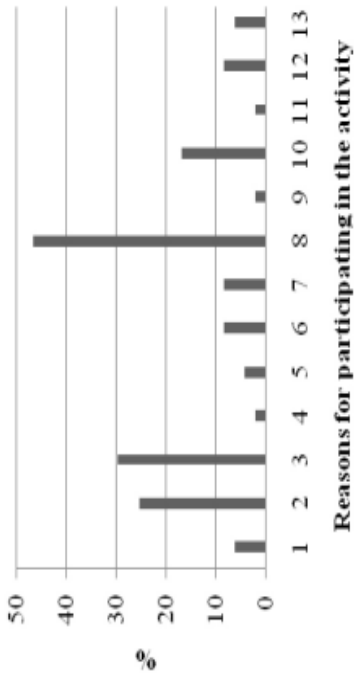


Fig. 9. Reasons for participating in the activity

- Reasons for participating in the activity**
1. To explore the Black Sea Region
 2. To undergo practical nature training
 3. To explore nature
 4. Personal development,
 5. To explore the natural beauties of Kure Mountains
 6. To get away from daily stress and to contemplate life outside of cities
 7. To transform theoretical information into practical knowledge
 8. To become conscious and acquire environmental awareness
 9. To become better informed and understand the forest eco-system
 10. Love of nature
 11. To play outdoor sports
 12. To desire to meet new people, to socialize
 13. A different experience

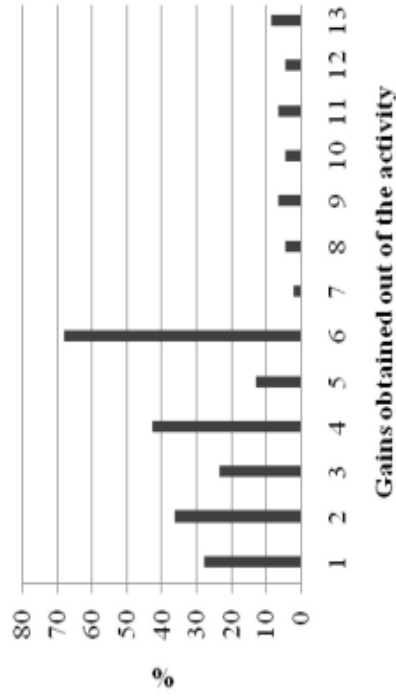


Fig. 10. Gains obtained from the natural site activities.

- Gains obtained out of the activity**
1. To gain a different perspective
 2. To perceive the value and importance of nature and a love of nature,
 3. To meet new people, to socialize
 4. To acquire practical knowledge about nature
 5. To gain the ability to read nature
 6. To become more sensitive, conscious, and aware
 7. To become more physically fit
 8. To become informed about the wildlife
 9. To explore the natural beauties of the region
 10. To learn about the flora
 11. To learn about forests
 12. Peace
 13. To acquire awareness of the human-nature interaction

After this experience, the Wilcoxon test was used in order to reveal if the participants acquired the awareness regarding the healing power of nature, if they decided to spend more time at natural sites, and if they apprehended the consciousness to escape from stress and uneasiness using their experience that they had in nature, and the difference between the situations before and after the training. The data was found to be statistically meaningful ($p=0.000$). The results clearly indicated that a person, whoever he/she is, and independent of age, gender, profession, education, and income level, realized the healing power of the nature by means of the training and decided to visit natural sites more frequently.

Impact of the Natural Site Experience on the Participants

The present study aimed to identify the impact of the natural site experience on the partic-

ipants by asking them the changes in their moods after a week at a natural site, the characteristics of the nature that resulted in these changes, which activities they enjoyed the most in natural sites, and finally which site that they visited attracted their attention the most, as well as the resource values of these areas.

All of the participants (100%) stated that after this natural site experience, they planned to visit natural sites more frequently. Figure 11 manifests that the areas that were most by the participants among all the natural sites visited. When the participants were questioned about the most impressive resource value of these sites, it was seen that the most attractive features were geological features, scenes of water, natural sounds (wind, water, leaves, etc...), historic structures, different vegetation types (flora), wildlife (fauna), natural beauties, untouched areas (difficult-to-access intact areas), the smell of the earth, height, colors (multiple sensory stim-

Table 2: Participants' level of interest in natural sites

	Frequency	%
<i>Frequency of Visiting a Natural Site</i>		
Everyday	3	6.4
Few times a week	12	25.5
Once a week	11	23.4
Once a month	13	27.7
Very rarely	8	17
Never	-	-
<i>Reasons for not Being Able to Visit a Natural Site Frequently</i>		
Lack of time	39	83.0
Distance	21	44.7
Dangerous/unsafe parks	2	4.3
Hesitation for the possibility of catch an infection due to mite and insect bites	4	8.5
Being deprived of nice, quality, open-air green areas	9	19.1
Deserted open-air green areas	2	4.3
Not catching one's attention	1	2.1
<i>Changes in State of Mind after Visiting Natural Sites</i>		
I feel rested and relaxed.	42	89.4
I feel distanced from my problems and troubles.	16	34.0
I do not feel any difference.	1	2.1
<i>Participants Methods to Escape Stress and to Relax</i>		
To withdraw and go out, to get some fresh air, to have a walk, to play sports	33	70.2
To listen to music, dance, read, sleep, or to do other activities inside the house	17	36.2
To spend time in natural sites, to watch nature and listen to the natural sounds such as birds, wind, and water	18	38.3
To take medication to relax, go to a doctor, or to obtain an expert's opinion	-	-
To do nothing, to let things go	-	-
<i>Activities in Natural Sites</i>		
To communicate with plants	23	48.9
To interact with wildlife	13	27.7
To listen to nice sounds such as water, birds, and wind	27	57.4
Indoor activities (reading books-newspapers, listening to music, sitting, lying, eating-drinking)	21	44.7
To stay alone to meditate	20	42.6
To socialize	14	29.8
To carry out expeditions and to collect natural materials	23	48.9
To participate in sports activities such as walking, cycling, or jogging	26	55.3
To watch and experience nature	36	76.6

ulation), and fresh air, and feeling sunlight and breeze.

About 81% of the participants reported that fresh air was the main natural feature for them to achieve a more positive state of mind, while for 74.5% this feature was sound, images, and the reflection of water, as well as trees and greenery. The other features are summarized in Table 3. The results also showed that 72.3% of the participants could escape stress, 66% felt relaxed, and 61.7% relaxed after this nature experience. Other changes in the mood can be seen in Table 3. When the participants were asked which activities they enjoyed the most during their stay in the site, 91.5% said it was to explore nature, while for 85.1% it was hiking. Other activities that were favored by the participants are shown in Table 3.

DISCUSSION

The conclusions drawn at the end of this research, aiming at identifying the changes in the moods of the people who stayed at a natural site for one week, are closely associated with the following studies, which point out the healing and soothing power of nature. When the researches related to positive effects of natural sites are investigated, it can be seen that the natural site experiences' contributions to the participants in Kastamonu show significant similarities with the positive effects of other natural sites. The examined studies are given above chronologically.

Studies regarding the positive effects of nature on human psychology have increased in a

large number since the last 30 years. A study that is widely accepted to be the very first of work of its kind was carried out in an attempt to identify the psychological benefits people obtain from the gardens of their houses (Kaplan 1973). Ulrich (1979) introduced the effects of visual landscape on the emotional state of stressful students who recently completed a final exam, and concluded that students who observe nature scenes are less stressed than those that observe overbuilt city landscapes; the latter become even more stressed in comparison to their stress level after the exam.

The researchers working in this field discussed the healing and soothing power of the nature since 1983. The studies carried out by Ulrich (1984) and Kaplan (2001) clearly express that even watching natural and green spaces from a window actually helped patients achieve a more positive state of mind. Ulrich (1984) underlined the importance of therapy gardens by introducing a distinct difference between the recovery processes of two groups of patients, having the same surgery, based on whether their rooms faced natural areas. In addition, in his study dated 1991, Ulrich also acclaimed the difference in the stress levels of people subject to an urban environment and natural spaces, while in 1992, he attempted to identify the effects of a design on one's state of mind. The results obtained from these studies are quite similar to the conclusions drawn at the end of the present study. In another study, Ulrich et al. (1993) compared the efficiency of a treatment carried out in a room where a picture of a natural landscape

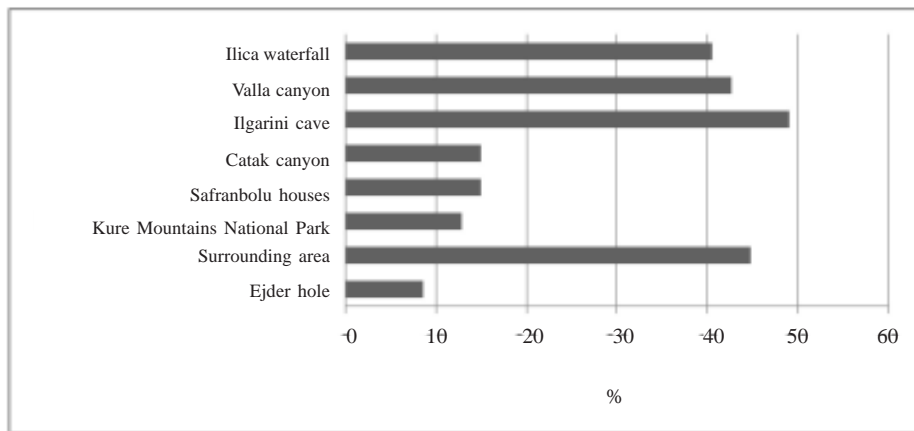


Fig. 11. The natural formations that were favored the most by the participants

was placed, to that of another treatment in a room without any pictures, and drew similar conclusions. Hartig et al. (1991) put forward some strong evidence showing people spending more time in natural sites can overcome mental fatigue more easily than the others. In this study, three groups were focused, the first consisted of the group of people who spend time in natural sites, the second, who have a holiday in an urban environment and the third, who do not have a holiday, were asked to correct the mistakes in a reading text and the obtained results were compared to each other. In the end, it was explored that the most successful group was the one which spent time in natural sites. There

are a number of studies showing that natural sceneries and sounds can be used as an efficient means to control the pain, decreasing anxiety, and providing relief during surgical interventions, and positively affecting blood pressure and heart rate (Diette et al. 2003; Tse et al. 2002; Katcher et al. 1984). It was also believed that being in contact with the nature helped reduce stress, cholesterol, pain and blood pressure (Frumkin 2001; Ulrich 1999). Diette et al. (2003) reported that patients looking at a roof structure with a natural look have lower levels of pain than those who have a view of a brick roof. A number of other studies suggested that nature has a positively confusing effect (Ulrich

Table 3. Characteristic features of nature, activities and their impact on the users

	Frequency	%
<i>Characteristic Features of Nature that Induce a Good Mood</i>		
Fresh air	38	80.9
Sound, images, and reflection of water	35	74.5
Trees and greenery	35	74.5
Sounds (leaves, wind, wildlife, etc...) and fragrance	34	72.3
Flowers and colors	33	70.2
Visual beauties, attractive designs	31	66.0
Opportunity to watch natural features	30	63.8
Being far away from city noise	26	55.3
Light and sun	17	36.2
Wildlife	17	36.2
Rock formations	16	34.0
Multiple-sensory stimulation	14	29.8
Getting away, escaping	13	27.7
Privacy, secrecy	8	17.0
Openness	6	12.8
<i>Changes Occurring in One's State of Mind after the Nature Experience</i>		
Escaping from stress	34	72.3
Relaxation	31	66.0
Tranquilization	29	61.7
Feeling positive feelings	26	55.3
Renovation	26	55.3
Concentration	25	53.2
Rejuvenation and refreshment	17	36.2
Problem-solving	13	27.7
Peacefulness	11	23.4
Getting away, running away	10	21.3
No difference	1	2.1
<i>Activities Enjoyed to Perform During this Experience</i>		
To explore the nature, to wander around	43	91.5
Hiking	40	85.1
To be in a natural environment	36	76.6
Nature training	35	74.5
To watch the sky, nature	32	68.1
To chat with friends	31	66.0
To burn fires	26	56.3
Outdoor therapy	17	36.2
To sing	14	29.8
To sit down and rest	13	27.7
To listen to music	12	25.5
To play games	10	21.3
To read a book	9	19.1
To eat-drink	8	17.0
To draw pictures	2	4.3

et al. 1991) that decreases anxiety and distracts patients focusing on their pain (Varni et al. 1996). Rachel and Stephen Kaplan, in their book titled "The Experience of Nature: A Psychological Perspective" (1989) pointed out that the patients' senses become stimulated when exposed to nature, resulting in restorative experiences that play an important role in the recovery process. Dannenmaier (1995) suggested that to be in contact with nature reduces stress, results in positive distraction, provides social support (facilitating communication with family members and friends), and reinforces emotional control. Once again, the results of this study are closely associated with those obtained here. Another study, carried out by Ulrich and Parsons (1992) on a number of participants with a certain amount of initial stress level brought out that the blood pressure drops and becomes regulated after being exposed to the natural environment for only 4-6 minutes. The study also confirmed that the subjects' states of mind became more positive. The studies carried out on healthy individuals, on the other hand, displayed that important psychological renovation effects can be obtained after being visually exposed to natural sites or natural environment simulations for even 3-5 minutes (Fredricksan and Levenson 1998; Hartig et al. 1995; Parsons and Hartig 2000; Ulrich et al. 1991; Vanden Berg et al. 2003). Ulrich carried out many studies showing the positive feelings one obtains after spending time in natural sites (Ulrich 1981, 1984, 1992, 2000).

The researchers have made different styles of researches for measuring the positive effects of nature on people. Some have made investigations about the stress levels of people who live in different areas and found that the people, who live in the places having more green surroundings than others, have lower stress levels (Jiang et al. 2014; Pasanen et al. 2014; Kaplan 1973; Ulrich 1991, 1992). Some of the researchers investigated that even watching the natural scenes from a window can provide positive effects (Ulrich 1984; Kaplan 2001; Diette et al. 2003; Tse et al. 2002; Katcher et al. 1984). Another group made tests under controlled conditions in a laboratory setting (Trier Social Stress Test, TSST). The TSST has been used widely to induce mental stress under controlled conditions (Kudielka and Wust 2010; von Dawans et al. 2011). The another group of researchers tried to put forward the positive effects of nature on people by creating

simulations and they revealed with these simulations, having high green intensity, have positive effects on stress (Fredricksan and Levenson 1998; Hartig et al. 1995; Parsons and Hartig 2000; Ulrich et al. 1991; Van den Berg et al. 2003). Some of the researchers presented the positive effects of green spaces by the help of photographs and videos (Ulrich 1979; Ulrich et al. 1993). In some other studies it was examined that staying even for short time in nature or touching nature is an effective way to avoid stress and mental fatigue (Marselle et al. 2014; Frumkin 2001; Whitehouse et al. 2001; Hartig et al. 1991; Varni et al. 1996; Dannenmaier 1995; Ulrich 1981, 1984, 1992, 1999, 2000; Kaplan and Kaplan 1989).

Further, the present paper exhibits the natural site experiences' and nature's creation of the differences on people, who performed natural site events during a week time. The unique part of the paper is participants were taught about the nature by experts and they stayed in the nature for longer periods of time.

CONCLUSION

These natural areas provide users the opportunity to observe resource values unique to the region such as flora, fauna, natural geological formations, and historic structures, to experience multiple-sensory stimulation by perceiving natural colors, fresh air, sunlight, breeze, the smell of earth, to go trekking in difficult-to-access, untouched, and intact areas, to listen to natural sounds such as water, birds, wild animals, wind, and leaves both during the day and the night, to chat and sing around a camp fire at night, to participate in music and dance performances and hiking, to collect natural materials, to take photographs, to watch, to sit, and to eat and drink in natural sites. The results obtained from this paper suggest that the participants escaped from stress, relaxed, regained their temper, had positive emotions, and felt renovated. In addition, participants could better understand sensitivity, awareness and consciousness about nature by the help of nature training and through their experiences in nature, and as a result, their desire of benefiting themselves with positive effects of nature will increase thereafter, and so as conscious nature users they will have the chance of benefiting the positive effects by investing shorter periods from their busy schedule. A person, whoever he/she is, and indepen-

dent of age, gender, profession, education, and income level, realized the healing power of the nature by means of the training and decided to visit natural sites more frequently.

After natural site experience, all of the participants planned to visit natural sites more frequently. The healing effect of nature on people is a well-known fact. Also, with reference to the conclusions drawn here, it should be borne in mind that spending time in open-air green areas more frequently, sensing the natural formations and carrying out outdoor activities in these areas, such as feeling the wind and the smell of the earth, listening to natural sounds such as water, birds, wind, and leaves will help alleviate problems and troubles of everyday life. Awareness should be further raised on this issue to increase the habit of spending more time in natural sites in spite of the hectic and stressful life of the present time. For a general public consciousness, it is of utmost importance that people dedicate much time for activities in natural sites. In this way, a more healthy and relaxed society can be achieved.

RECOMMENDATION

People are not fully aware of the using power of nature and its positive effects. Therefore, raising conscious and benefiting from these positive effects in a right way can be seen as a positive approach. Thus, it has to be multiple exercises of creating sensitivity, awareness and consciousness for nature. To benefit from the nature's recovering power; individuals should attend nature trainings in national and global scales and should be more aware of nature issue. Spending time in nature and gaining natural site experiences are very significant in terms of feeling nature's recovering and relaxing power. Performing activities such as hiking, collecting natural materials, taking photographs, watching around, sitting, eating and drinking in natural sites, help individuals to escape from their stress and anxiety. Multiple sensational stimulations can be created by perceiving natural colors, fresh air, sunlight, breeze, the smell of earth. Listening to natural sounds such as water, birds, wild animals, wind, and leaves creates a positive effect on individuals. To avoid the stress of the urban life, individuals should spend much time in open green areas and should make this a life habit. More such studies should be

conducted to closely monitor and investigate the benefits of nature for human life and the results of such studies needs to be widely communicated to the masses to make them aware and attract them to such nature bestowed benefits.

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