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Abstract

Restorative environments reduce stress levels, promote positive moods, enhance recovery, and increase attention spans (Berto, 2005; Hartig, Mang, & Evans, 1991; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; Ulrich, 1993). A particular characteristic of a restorative environment associates with its degree of compatibility in which the physical environment fits the individual’s preferences functions (Kaplan, 1995). The present study was motivated by the gap in knowledge of the associates of functional properties of campus environments promoting a sense of retreat. Indeed, most students are exposed to many stress and anxiety drawbacks due to academic achievements, studying, or career competence (Felsten, 2009; Lau & Yang, 2009). These mental stress and fatigue conditions can reduce their focus and attention spans for productive accomplishments (Kaplan, 1995; Tennessen & Cimprich, 1995). Research suggests that attention fatigues consequence performance errors and being irritated (Korpela, Ylen, Tyrvainen, & Slvennoinen, 2008). Therefore, research is needed to evaluate how outdoor campus features and functionalities can provide restorative experiences that promote mental health. This study focused on an outdoor campus plaza within NCSU that situates between four main campus buildings, including the Hunt library. This plaza incorporated a variety of pathways, vegetation, elevations, and materials. Overall, 118 users participated in a survey with multiple-choice answers. Employing Cross-tab analysis, the results indicated a positive association with users’ perception of a relaxing outdoor campus environment and opportunities for sitting, walking, private spaces, socializing, eating, reading, and lying on the grass (P<0.001). These functions can be provided through proposing design concepts that incorporate different pathway patterns, seating spaces, vegetation, and elevations. The findings also implied a positive association between perception of creative, aesthetically pleasing, functional, and diverse environment, and restorative experience (P<0.001). Consistent with previous research (Bodin & Hartig, 2003; Kaplan, 1995; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; Kim & Kaplan, 2004; Staats, Kievet, & Hartig, 2003; van den Berg, Koole, & van der Wulp, 2003), the findings accentuate the importance of diverse opportunities for movement, socializing, being private, and aesthetically pleasing outdoor campus environments to restore mental fatigue.

Suggested Citation