

Effects of the Slowness Course on the Slowness Attitude of Higher Education Students: Measuring and Evaluating Atasehir Adiguzel Vocational School Students' Attitudes Towards Slowness Before and After the Slowness Course¹

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Abstract

Life in Istanbul, which is the sixth largest metropole in the world and the first in Europe with a population of sixteen million, is lived at a pointless speed and with the constant worry of getting somewhere. Higher education students, who have to live by keeping up with this speed, also miss the pleasant aspects of life and remain indifferent to what is going on around them while trying not to fall behind in the race to catch opportunities. Atasehir Adiguzel Vocational School, which is a higher education institution providing vocational education in Istanbul, has started to give "Slowness" as a compulsory course to all of its students, breaking new ground in the world with the aim of raising the awareness and conducted a study in order to measure and evaluate the effects of the course on students' perception of slowness. As a result of the research, in which attitudes before and after the lesson in different fields were evaluated with 15 different statements, significant differences were found in 12 out of the 15 statements.

Keywords: Cittaslow, Slow food, Slowness course, Slowness movement, Slow tourism

Introduction

Having the option to speed up the pace at any time, but not feeling obligated to do so simply explains the Slow life philosophy (Kostem,2020: 3) The philosophy, which defends the balance of nature, the cycle of the seasons, and the need to live a harmonious life as it used to be, says that the source of the harmony problem between modern life and Slow life is "speed". This world of speed has brought its problems that our ancestors have never experienced. While the lifestyle of human beings was simpler, calmer and in harmony with nature, their choices about life were limited by the opportunities offered by the world to all human beings. "Time sickness", a term coined by the American doctor Larry Dossey in 1982, expresses that time is running out and that one has to run more to catch up with the time that has gone. While Klaus Schwab, President of the World Economic Forum, talks about a world order where the fast beats the slow, British Psychologist Guy Claxton believes that acceleration has now become our second nature. (Honore,2008: 8-11)

Referring to the fact that people use the time they have more carefully about the elements that make up their daily lives, that is, they use time for the elements that are meaningful and important to them. Slow life is an alternative approach that can turn the structure dominated by speed in favor of humans. One of the biggest desires of people today is not just having some free time but having enough time to do something meaningful. This can be summarized as getting more satisfaction from all the activities in daily life and making the things done more understandable (Parkins,2004: 364).

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At first the general philosophy of Slowness is stated and then all sub-branches are briefly explained. Then method of the survey is mentioned and the results are given. In this study, both the attitudes of the students at the higher education level towards slow life and the changing attitudes towards the phenomenon of slowness as a result of the slowness course were measured and stated. The aim of the study is to present a different perspective to all educational institutions that may want to offer their students a new method in terms of perceiving life at a wide awareness level.

Slowness Movement

Slow life movement has principles such as producing, consuming consciously, thinking about the welfare of the society lived in, knowing that recycling is as important as production, choosing to be offline when necessary, choosing voluntary simplicity instead of making constant and endless choices. This gives us the opportunity to direct our thoughts to more important things (Köstem,2020: 5-14)

The emergence of the slowness movement has been with Slow food movement started in Italy by Carlo Petrini (Yurtseven et al.,2010: 3). The aim is to bring back the well-known cooking methods, meals made with traditional methods, to preserve and re-recognize forgotten product types because mass production is difficult (Freedman,2008: 29).

Slowfood is not related to the act of eating, it is mostly about understanding the relationship of gastronomy with politics, agriculture and environment. It also plays an important and active role as a movement in agriculture and ecology. It advocates biodiversity in foods, works to develop and popularize taste education, and organizes events that will bring together those who produce and consume excellent foods (Yurtseven,2020: 20).

In the concept of Slow Food there is the idea of “good, clean and fair” food. “Good” is explained by the taste of the food and the sense of pleasure it arouses in people, by “clean” that defines without harming human health, animals and the environment, and “fair” that means that the producers and workers may get what they truly deserve (slowfood.com, 2021).

According to the founder of Slow food, Carlo Petrini, food should be related in every aspect from plate to planet and so be good, clean and fair. That is because the main purpose of Slow food is only to defend good food and gastronomic pleasure by preserving traditional food, caring about the growing and processing methods of the main ingredients and thus support biodiversity (Sagir,2017:53).

Besides protecting food and agricultural heritage, the Slow food movement aims raise awareness on consumers concerning traditional and local foods. This awareness returns new consumer demands towards the processes of natural farming and agriculture, supervised by Slow food movement, suggests Nosi and Zanni (2004). For destinations to ensure a sustainable approach to tourism development, consideration needs to be given to the nature and development of their tourism product. In turn, the importance of food in the marketing of destinations is acknowledged by Sparks et al. (2003) who proposed a great dining experience, embracing food and wine, can play a key role in the appeal of a tourist destination.

In the Cittaslow manifesto it is stated that the Cittaslow international movement aims to get the civilizations of the towns with the serenity of their daily lives and bring them together in a peaceful exchange program. Towns that still appreciate the slow passing of seasons, their authentic products, respecting their fine flavors, their rituals and traditions (www.cittaslow.org, 2021).

Cittaslow International has certain rules for the “Slow City” candidates. To be a Slow city, one must agree and accept the guidelines of Slow food, improve conviviality and conserve the local environment. For the certification of towns, Cittaslow International concerns 72 requirements for quality that are subdivided into 7 macro areas. These are:

- 1) Energy and environmental policies (Parks and green areas, renewable energy, transport, recycling, etc),
- 2) Infrastructure policies (Alternative mobility, cycle paths, street furniture, etc.),
- 3) Quality of urban life policies (Requalification and reuse of marginal areas, cable network city, etc.),
- 4) Agricultural, touristic and artisan policies (Prohibiting the use of GMO in agriculture, increasing the value of working techniques and traditional crafts, etc.),

- 5) Policies for hospitality, awareness and training (Good welcome, increasing awareness of operators and traders, etc.),
- 6) Social cohesion (Integration of disable people, poverty, minorities discriminated, etc.),
- 7) Partnerships (Collaboration with other organizations promoting natural and traditional food, etc.) (cittaslow.org, 2021)

Even though number of studies consider Cittaslow as a marketing activity, it should be examined in terms of environment, sustainability or even architecture because Cittaslow models the local development, considers the life quality of local people and stands against the negativeness of globalization (Ekincek and Aksöz; 2016: 175). When the slow cities in the world are examined, it can be observed that there is a common understanding against globalization, they can preserve their local differences, they manage to keep their local economies alive, they attach meaning to the local, they protect the cultural and traditional, they pay attention to the locality of the businesses and they succeed in contributing to sustainability by using renewable alternative energy systems (Arikan and Unsever,2020: 48).

Traveling slow emphasizes a connection to local people, cultures of the places, their traditional food and local music (Harman,2020: 107). It might be defined briefly as “a kind of an educational travel that has an emotional impact”. The Slow food movement managed to draw attention from the worldwide chain food back to traditional restaurants by showing how the using regionally sourced ingredients worked and developed local economies. Yurtseven and Kaya (2011:94) in their research on Slow tourists stated that dedicated Slow tourists are mostly educated independent travelers who like slow experiences while discovering different cultures and identities. They know what they expect about the region they visit and enjoy eco-gastronomy. On the other hand, because everything tourists want to get for tourism can be consumed, the set up in the touristic areas are designed to feed the endless consumption.

Although tourism products are highly dependent on destination resources, these resources are not under the control of the tourism industry. Destinations are popular because of their touristic value, but at the same time, tourism itself may follow such developments in that destination (destroying nature for touristic construction, using culture more for consumption etc.) that undermines their attractiveness of it (Davidson and Maitland,1997: 95). Tourism Paradox is the name we give to tourism in the industrial sense, that disrupts and/or destroys the natural and cultural environment necessary for the existence of tourism (Unsever,2012: 5). Slow tourism aims at a sustainable tourism that respects nature and culture. It is essential to keep everything alive today as it was in the past and to be transferred to future generations.

The structuring of tourism without destroying and replacing the existing local, traditional and ancient elements is called the tourism equinox. The Slow tourism movement, that was emerged as a reaction to the effects of commercial-oriented mass tourism that destroys the natural cultures of the regions, argues that only the local residents, who are the owners of these beauties, will protect the natural and cultural values (Arikan and Unsever,2020: 52-53).

In the movement of slowness, while acting with the idea of protecting the the natural and the local environment, it is intended to reveal the unique values and cultures of the cities, to bring the pace of life to a level that allows social interactions, to realize what is happening in the background of what they eat and drink, and to enjoy life in this way.

Sustaining Slow tourism requires not only service production but also contact with emotions. This style of tourism turns the guest into an active participant through learning and rediscovery (Barkan and Akkoc,2020: 127).

Focusing on concepts such as good, clean, fair, localization, local society, sharing, and sustainability in different areas, the slowness movement reflects the sensitivity of millions of people against the exploitation created by the market economy created by the global economy. In addition to its questioning approach to global trade, the slowness movement is thought to inspire the society in areas such as the protection of cultural heritage, improving the quality of life, sustainable development, and new urbanism models (Kaya,2020: 72-74).

After the industrial revolution, there comes a period where those who own the machines can produce as much as they want by using the power of humans, animals and nature, so this period in which the resources are used as if they were unlimited, prepared the ground for the problems experienced today.

Time has also been an important cost factor in consumption which is effective in the extinction of biodiversity, and speed has affected the economies as well as social and cultural relations. In the last quarter of the 21st century, global brands such as Mc Donald's, Starbucks, Coca Cola etc. became the symbol of the speed regime, while posing a threat to local economies and local products. Cittaslow (Slow City) movement's most important goal is to reveal the "public-consumers" who demand a production that is eco-friendly, re-gaining and recyclable. In addition, with the preference of local products, revival, employment and prosperity expected, local producers are taking action, with organic production and increase in the local economy by enabling the products to gain value. (Hekimci,2014:45-49).

Humanity has been chasing endless wealth by establishing giant industries in a capitalism dominated economy. Instead of leaving a clean world for future generations, they preferred to get plenty of wealth and the alternative cost of this situation has been the destruction of nature. Scientists, who worry about the question "Is there no possibility of economic development without harming the environment?" and seek answers, have started to produce solutions on how to provide environmentally friendly economic development as an element of sustainable development. Right there we realize Cittaslow movement which aims to provide economic development with the protection of natural and local values in an environmentalist manner in which future generations are considered. That is why the Cittaslow membership criterias includes the vision of providing sustainable development (Kartal,2019: 10).

The Slow food counters the loss of local distinctiveness related to food, conviviality, sensing the place, and hospitality, on the other side Cittaslow aims to protect the urban livability and life quality. In Slow cities citizens and local leaders are very careful about the local history and take advantage of the distinct local materials to develop more sustainable ways. Thinking that in global aspect, the family farms are 98% of all farms thus owning at least 53% of agricultural land to produce more than half of the world's food (Martinez et al.,2018: 115), developing local farms and educating local farmers plays an important role in the world's agricultural future. Sustainable food production is very important to gain overall development of people, that's why it is one of the underlying philosophies of the '2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' (Woolston,2020: 54).

Economic globalization consists of actions to remove the inefficient from the market and destroy borders in order to increase profits. Income inequality between regions, unemployment, political pressures on workers' wages have brought along the search for an alternative system. The endogenous development model focuses on the local-scale development of the region, based on regions. Development is provided by local, cultural, natural and human resources. This model forms the basis of the Slow economy. There are 7 basic elements of Slow economic understanding. These are: Reducing ecological footprints, that is, alleviating the burden of production and consumption on the world / Localization / Justice in all social and economic policies / Approaches of regional and national governments prioritizing social and ecological life / Active citizens in sustainable societies / Everyone's adoption of a common action / Formation of new institutions that lead the people to ecological life (Kaya,2020: 69-78).

The aim in Slow farming is to increase the yield in plant and animal production. The rapidly increasing ecological problems, the decrease in the nutritional value of the food produced, the pollution created by pesticides and chemical fertilizers are undeniable. The animals have returned from the pastures to the farms for feed consumption. Although this is not exactly the situation in our country the trend is in this direction. Profitability and productivity decline created uniform agricultural enterprises, and agriculture and animal husbandry were well separated. When it comes to the fact that chemical fertilizers and pesticides pollute the environment and the air, ecological deterioration has come along. The decrease in biodiversity has also reflected on the nutritional value of plant products. Slow farming aims to put agriculture on a human and environmentally friendly trajectory. There is a need for a joint effort to bring together science and traditional methods that have been applied for years (Özkaya,2020: 92-95).

Ecological agriculture needs to be supported by small businesses and villagers. It may be possible for family businesses to maintain a profitable production by organizing as cooperatives. With agroecology, agriculture is suggested by using ecology instead of agricultural chemicals (Altieri,1995).

The Idea of a Slowness Course

Knowing all the pros and cons of metropole life, Atasehir Adiguzel Vocational School in Istanbul decided to raise awareness among its students on Slow living to give them an alternative point of view.

Atasehir Adiguzel Vocational School is a Foundation's Higher Education Institution that provides practical vocational training for approximately 1,000 students. The Academic Board of the Vocational School has determined that its students live at a meaningless speed in this competitive world, and started searching for a way to slow them down. After a year of research meetings, they came up with the "Slowness Course Project" that includes a 2 ECTS credit compulsory course named "Slowness" for all students in all programs. The coursebook for Slowness was written by the Cittaslow Turkey Science Committee members. For different themes of the course, members of the Cittaslow Turkey Science Board are welcomed as guests to meet the students. The course topics were: Slow life, Slow science, Slow food, Cittaslow, Slow economy, Slow agriculture, Slow travel and Slow tourism.

- Students after the course are able to define the concept of slowness and know its relation with daily life, defend the necessity of the Slow life approach and lead their lives in the slowness frame.
- Also they are able to define the philosophy after the Slow food movement and know it is needed for the future of human beings.
- They are able to connect the reasons for the emergence of Slow cities with global events and understand the economic effects they create.
- They can understand the connection of the concept of travel with the Slow travel movement, know the reasons and purposes of the Slow travel. Searches for environmentally friendly modes of transportation and can make destination planning to travel slowly.
- They know that in Slow economy, people use local community, local environment, local resources. They realize the sharing through relationships without intermediaries. They value the local culture and the equal distribution of economic values more.
- By understanding how industrial agriculture is dominant, they can discuss how a food suitable for the definition of Slow food is determined, and can understand what can be done to spread the agriculture system suitable for Slow movement by knowing the impact of the existing agricultural system on the environment and people.
- They understand the concept of tourism, alternative tourism types and Slow tourism integrated with the principles of Slow life and can indicate the differences in practice. They give a meaning to the concept of sustainable local development by being aware of the sustainability contribution of Slow tourism to the environment of the places visited.

The project was first implemented on 9 hundred students as a pilot project in the 2019 - 2020 Academic Year and in the second semester of the 2020-2021 Academic Year, a scientific research was carried out on how the attitudes of the students who took the slowness course have changed in the 15 slowness issues stated.

Materials and Methods

A survey consisting of 15 statements was formed to measure the 15 issues related to Slowness these are :

1. The concept of Slowness
2. Happiness
3. Conscious consumption
4. Food safety: good-clean-fair
5. Small-scale and traditional farming
6. Biodiversity
7. Conducting urban activities with slowness and respecting the local heritage
8. Sustainable local economy
9. Protection of natural, historical, and cultural values of cities
10. Locally focused economy,
11. Nature and human friendly agriculture
12. Slow travel
13. Slow tourism
14. Cittaslow tourism
15. The tourist's responsibility for slowness

The statements were evaluated by a 5 point Likert scale from “I strongly disagree” to “I strongly agree”.

At the beginning of the Slowness course the survey was conducted to all the students taking the course. After the 14th week the same survey was conducted to the students again and the data is analyzed.

Results and Discussion

The SPSS package program was used to analyze the data. The reliability score (Cronbach alpha) of the survey is measured at 0.7. To understand whether there is a significant difference between the item-based pre-test and post-test scores of the students who took the slowness course, a "dependent groups t-test" was conducted. As a result of the dependent groups' t-tests;

- The difference between the arithmetic means of Statement 1 (The concept of slowness; We can define it as living at a pace where life can be enjoyed.) measuring the Concept of Slowness, were found to be statistically significant ($p < .05$), in favor of the post-test. That means the students became more aware of the slowness concept after taking the courses.
- The difference between the arithmetic means of Statement 2 (Happiness is not achieved by striving for more, but by reaching the capacity to enjoy less.) measuring Happiness were found to be statistically significant ($p < .05$), in favor of the post-test. That is the students after the course learned how to be happy with small things. (In this pandemic days this was a very usefull and meaningful learning for all)
- The difference between the arithmetic means of Statement 3 (Conscious consumption is to consume as much as we need and to choose the way that causes the least harm to nature, people and the world in general) measuring Conscious Consumption were found to be statistically significant ($p < .05$), in favor of the post-test. Now the students know that while consuming things they should consider not to harm nature, be fair to the producers of the products, use goods as much as they are useful, be more productive and consume less.
- The difference between the arithmetic means of Statement 4 (Food safety is ensured by the realization of good-clean-fair principles) measuring Food safety: good-clean-fair were found to be statistically significant ($p < .05$), in favor of the post-test. The students are now curious about what they eat, is it fresh, is it harmful to their body, how it is produced, is it locally produced, is sustainability kept during production etc.
- The difference between the arithmetic means of Statement 5 (Small-scale and traditional farming includes knowledge and wisdom that ensure the long-term sustainability of the relationship between man and nature) measuring Small scale and traditional farming were found to be statistically significant ($p < .05$), in favor of the post-test. Now they care about the relationship between human beings and nature and sustainability in traditional farming methods.
- The difference between the arithmetic means of Statement 6 (All societies have the right to preserve their biodiversity and the heritage of local knowledge about food and food production) measuring Biodiversity were not statistically significant ($p > .05$) but the score change is yet still in the favor of post test.
- The difference between the arithmetic means of Statement 7 (Every urban activity should be organized according to the principles of slowness and respect for local heritage.) measuring Conducting urban activities with slowness and respecting the local heritage were found to be statistically significant ($p < .05$), is in favor of the post-test. The students gained the knowledge of local heritage and its relation with slowness.
- The difference between the arithmetic means of Statement 8 (As sustainable local economic life develops with locally specific values, income justice is ensured.) measuring Sustainable local economy were found to be statistically significant ($p < .05$), in favor of the post-test. The students now know how supporting local products effects local economy and how this is important for the sustainability.
- The difference between the arithmetic means of Statement 9 (It is important to protect the natural environment, historical assets and cultural values of the cities.) measuring Locally focused economy were found to be statistically significant ($p < .05$), in favor of the post-test.
- The difference between the arithmetic means of Statement 10 measuring (Understanding of economy; It should include relations of production, consumption, sharing and exchange on the basis of ecology, local development and local communities.) were found to be statistically significant ($p < .05$), is in favor of the post-test.
- The difference between the arithmetic means of Statement 11 (We need to create a nature and human friendly agriculture system.) measuring Nature and human friendly agriculture were found to be statistically significant ($p < .05$), in favor of the post-test. They learned the importance of creating a nature and human friendly agriculture system and so to demand these in their choices.

- The difference between the arithmetic means of Statement 12 (Rapid mass travels increase air pollution due to carbon emissions and harm the natural environment.) measuring Slow travel were found to be statistically significant ($p < .05$), in favor of the post-test. They now know the different ways to plan a slow trip.
- The difference between the arithmetic means of Statement 13 (It is important to create an emotional bond with the environment that includes the natural, cultural and social values of the destination and to experience the local culture.) measuring Slow tourism were found to be statistically significant ($p < .05$), is in favor of the post-test. While choosing among different tourism options, they will know the natural, cultural and local values of the destination.
- The difference between the arithmetic means of Statement 14 (Perception of time and sense of belonging to a place are two important concepts in tourism.) measuring Cittaslow tourism were not statistically significant ($p > .05$) but the score change is yet still in the favor of post-test.
- The difference between the arithmetic means of Statement 15 (The tourist is a responsible and productive consumer.) measuring Tourists responsibility for slowness were not statistically significant ($p > .05$) but the score change is yet still in the favor of post-test.

The results indicate that the course has positive progress in students' attitudes towards slowness as shown in the Table:

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences							
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Statement 1	pretest1 posttest1	-0,76250	0,69799	0,07804	-0,91783	-0,60717	-9,771	79	0,000
Statement 2	Pretest2 posttest2	-0,85000	0,65796	0,07356	-0,99642	-0,70358	-11,555	79	0,000
Statement 3	Pretest3 posttest3	-0,86250	0,54526	0,06096	-0,98384	-0,74116	-14,148	79	0,000
Statement 4	Pretest 4 posttest 4	-0,73750	0,70699	0,07904	-0,89483	-0,58017	-9,330	79	0,000
Statement 5	Pretes 5 posttest 5	-0,88750	0,63632	0,07114	-1,02911	-0,74589	-12,475	79	0,000
Statement 6	Pretest 6 posttest 6	-0,02500	0,63595	0,07110	-0,16652	0,11652	-0,352	79	0,726
Statement 7	pretest 7 posttest 7	-0,81250	0,61816	0,06911	-0,95006	-0,67494	-11,756	79	0,000
Statement 8	pretest 8 posttest 8	-0,81250	0,57575	0,06437	-0,94063	-0,68437	-12,622	79	0,000
Statement 9	pretest 9 posttest 9	-0,90000	0,73948	0,08268	-1,06456	-0,73544	-10,886	79	0,000
Statement 10	pretest10 posttest10	-1,07500	0,56870	0,06358	-1,20156	-0,94844	-16,907	79	0,000
Statement 11	pretest11 posttest11	-0,87500	0,68205	0,07626	-1,02678	-0,72322	-11,475	79	0,000
Statement 12	pretest12 posttest12	-1,12500	0,62389	0,06975	-1,26384	-0,98616	-16,128	79	0,000
Statement 13	pretest13 posttest13	-0,81250	0,76463	0,08549	-0,98266	-0,64234	-9,504	79	0,000
Statement 14	pretest14 posttest14	-0,03750	0,77040	0,08613	-0,20894	0,13394	-0,435	79	0,664
Statement 15	pretest15 posttest15	-0,05000	0,88447	0,09889	-0,24683	0,14683	-0,506	79	0,615

Also, students attending the course stated that after taking the course;

- They started paying attention to what was going on around them instead of looking at their phones while waiting for the bus.
- They show more importance and care to the elders around them.
- They try to buy more natural and local products when shopping for food.
- They try to take their time to think while making a decision
- They are paying more attention on the local history and culture of the cities where they live

Conclusion

Is it obligatory to be better, faster, stronger and more cruel to earn a living? Knowing that it is possible to allocate time for things you love to do and people you enjoy being with, and knowing what to do for it, can it offer the key to a happy life? With the slowness course, it is aimed to offer an alternative perspective to the students and to explain the value of slowing down for a better life quality at the dizzying speed of the global world.

In this study, the changes in the perception of life of the individuals who received the slowness training were examined and it was observed that it created differences in their attitudes in many respects. Since this course is a first in the world, only the students in Atasehir Adiguzel Vocational School students joined the survey. Despite this limitation, it is essential to create individuals who approach their local values, culture, nature and people with respect and awareness. And this study aimed to offer a perspective to other educational institutions that aim to offer an alternative perspective for their students by teaching the principles of slow living.

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