


Chapter 6

Enhancing spiritual well-being through walking: A journey of transformation

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I need to stop talking and just walk; I need to walk to get my footing to walk my thoughts into the earth. I need to walk for those who do not know another way; I feel compelled to imprint a deeper consciousness of caring into our work and world. I want to walk for myself as well as for those who do not see nor know the origins or purpose of their calling. I have to have time out and just walk (Gros, 2014).

1. Introduction

I have walked through countless places and spaces, crossing the boundaries of time. Let me be your compass, guiding you through the journey of my research, step by step. This chapter explores the transformative power of walking and its impact on spiritual well-being. My personal interest in this connection was first sparked by the opportunity to participate in the Boland90 walking competition, a three-day event that involved walking 30 kilometres each day through the Hottentots Holland mountain region. However, because of trail damage from global warming, the event was cancelled, which led to the creation of a personalised walking challenge, the Stedra80-Camino.

The acronym “Stedra” (“Ste”[llenbosch] and “Dra”[kenstein]) derives from two municipal districts located in the Cape Winelands area. The Stedra80-Camino is a walking journey that covers a total of 80 kilometres over three days, starting from the Giraffe House on the R101 and passing through towns such as Klipmuts, Paarl, Wemmershoek, Franschoek, Boschendal, and Simondium in the Stellenbosch and Drakenstein districts. My familiarity with the route comes from my fieldwork conducted for my doctoral study.

Walking has been a fundamental part of human existence for millennia, with scholars offering various interpretations of this universal activity. Rebecca Solnit (2001) characterises walking as a deliberate, unhurried movement on foot that invites deep contemplation. Gros (2014), by contrast, defines it simply as the basic act of placing one foot in front of the other, while Kagge (2020) frames it as taking one step at a time. Terrien (2003) expands on this, portraying walking as not only a connection to wisdom gained through experience but also as a way of life. Watson (2006:290) sees walking as an opportunity for personal reflection, a moment to pause and assess one’s progress. Amartya Sen (1999) perceives walking as a creative activity; a form of introspection or meditation on the quality of life. Lucas and Diener (2008) highlight how walking establishes time and rhythm, while fostering a connection between the senses and the inner self, making it a transformative and motivational experience. Gros (2014) also associates walking with fun and playfulness, and Kagge (2020) emphasises that it nurtures inner peace, cultivating patience and silence.

Walking has always held a deep significance for me, shaped by my family’s tradition of walking. I come from a lineage of women who have used walking as a source of relief from pain, a form of cleansing, and a way to gain perspective. For us, walking is a means of healing and distancing ourselves from negative emotions. It plays a vital role in our overall well-being, offering fresh and unique perspectives on life that have been passed down through generations.

2. A journey of spiritual well-being through walking

The first three weeks of the COVID-19 (coronavirus disease 2019) lockdown were especially challenging for me, as someone who finds solace and joy in walking, hiking, and connecting with nature. As a free-spirited individual, I deeply cherish the simplicity of life's pleasures. In her insightful work, Collins-Kreiner (2010) explores the transformative power of walking, illustrating how it not only fosters a sense of community but also evokes profound emotional responses in individuals. Through a combination of scholarly analysis and creative exploration, Collins-Kreiner (2010) vividly demonstrates how the simple act of walking can shape our emotional landscapes and strengthen the bonds that connect us.

For me, walking is not only about developing the physique; it serves as a spiritual practice that nourishes my soul. As the weeks passed, my longing for the outdoors grew stronger. I began to explore creative ways to fulfil my need for physical and spiritual nourishment. Yet, confined to my home, surrounded by technological distractions and inundated with news of the pandemic's toll, I felt my spirit become increasingly restless and anxious. This internal turmoil manifested in various physical symptoms, from disrupted sleep patterns to digestive issues and persistent headaches. It became evident that my well-being was intricately linked to my ability to connect with nature through walking. This realisation sparked a personal journey of exploration into the profound effects of walking on spiritual well being.

Through my research, I discovered that walking has the power to enhance various aspects of well-being, including caring, healing, engagement, sympathy, thoughtfulness, and sharing (Hannibal, 2023). Walking allows us to care for others as well as the environment, fostering a sense of community and connection. It serves as a healing practise, offering solace and peace in times of distress. Engaging with the natural world stimulates empathy and encourages deep reflection.

The transition from strict lockdown measures to more lenient restrictions marked a key moment in my journey. With the move to level four restrictions, the freedom to walk outdoors from 6 a.m. to 9 a.m. brought a profound sense of liberation. Adjusting to this new routine became essential,

and I eagerly embraced the opportunity to reconnect with nature through walking. To my surprise, the habit of rising early for my morning walks left me feeling invigorated. Despite weeks of confinement, the joy of walking seemed to dissolve all previous limitations. My soul felt rejuvenated, and my body responded positively to the renewed physical activity.

The news that hiking or walking was once again permitted filled me with excitement and anticipation. The thought of venturing into the mountains, basking in the warm sunlight, and reconnecting with nature brought me boundless joy. At last, I would have the chance to experience true freedom, to immerse myself in the natural world, and to nurture my spiritual well-being once more.

Walking is a powerful tool for enhancing spiritual well-being, particularly during challenging times such as pandemics and lockdown periods. The ability to connect with nature, engage in physical activity, and reflect on one's life can have a profound impact on one's overall sense of well-being. By embracing walking as a transformative journey, individuals can tap into the deep connection between mind, body, and spirit, fostering a sense of inner peace, patience, and well-being.

3. Good health and well-being

The discourse surrounding the practice of walking in relation to well-being has gained significant attention in recent years. Researchers and organisations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Federation for Mental Health (WFMH) have highlighted the importance of walking as a cost-effective and accessible form of physical exercise that can contribute to preventing cardiovascular disease (CVD), addressing obesity, and reducing symptoms of depression. Moreover, studies have shown that walking in natural environments can provide even greater benefits to emotional well-being compared to walking indoors (Bowler et al., 2010; Thompson Coon et al., 2011).

The idea that walking promotes health is well supported, despite the subjective nature of 'well-being' as a concept. The WHO (2012) and WFMH (2012), along with various scholars, agree that CVD (Yusuf et al., 2020), obesity (Guh et al., 2009), and depression (Luppino et al., 2010)

are on the rise, posing threats to physical and mental well-being. Research shows that walking outdoors in nature further enhances emotional well-being compared to indoor walking (Bowler et al., 2010; Thompson Coon et al., 2011).

Walking comprehends the art of knowledge and is associated with the unique features of human language. It is not merely a physical activity but is intertwined with understanding, learning, and cognition. Walking is a complex activity that embodies knowledge and understanding, similar to how language functions as a unique tool for human expression and communication. The philosophy of walking presents a series of thoughts and trends on the definition of walking (Gros, 2014). From the literature discussed thus far, it is clear that while there are correlations in defining walking, there are also notable disparities. A range of themes has emerged from these discussions, touching on aspects such as movement, thinking, lifestyle, inventory, connection, time, rhythm, space, cleansing, spirit, and healing - all shaped by the ideology of walking. You as the individual dictate the pace, space, rhythm, and time. The type of well-being that you need determines the kind of walking that you will engage in, which in turn influences and contributes to your overall quality of life (Hannibal, 2023).

While the concept of “well-being” is subjective, it is clear that walking has a significant impact on physical and mental health. The philosophy of walking, as articulated by scholars like Gros (2014), emphasises the multifaceted nature of this activity, encompassing themes of movement, thought, connection, and healing. People have the freedom to determine the pace, space, rhythm, and duration of their walks according to their specific well-being needs.

4. Quality of life: Influenced by one’s state of well-being

Enhancing spiritual well-being through walking is a transformative journey that emphasises the vital role spiritual well-being plays in improving an individual’s quality of life. This aligns with the Australian Bureau of Statistics (s.a.) definition of well-being as the pursuit of optimal health, better living conditions, and an enhanced quality of life. Well-being is measured by evaluating life events and social contexts that impact

individuals, ultimately influencing personal lives and societal cohesion. Quality of life, in turn, is shaped by an individual's perception of their place in the world, influenced by cultural and value systems, physical health, psychological state, level of independence, social relationships, and environment. Human development seeks to expand individuals' freedom to achieve what they value, contributing to longer, healthier lives, access to education, and overall improvement in quality of life (Sen, 1999).

Spiritual well-being, as explored in this chapter, plays a crucial role in enhancing an individual's overall quality of life. It adds a deeper dimension to traditional measures of well-being, encompassing meaning, purpose, and a connection to something greater than oneself. When individuals prioritise their spiritual well-being through activities like walking and connecting with nature, they embark on a transformative journey that positively influences their overall sense of fulfilment.

There has been significant focus on the impact of well-being on an individual's quality of life. This perception is influenced by cultural value systems and is affected by physical health, psychological state, level of independence, social relationships, and environment. Human development aims to expand individuals' freedom to pursue what they value in life. This can be achieved by empowering individuals to actively participate in their own growth and development. This approach promotes longer, healthier lives, access to education, and improvements in overall well-being. Success is measured not only by material gains, but also by the lives that people are able to lead and the capabilities that they can fully realise.

Gros (2014) warns that the pursuit of unlimited wealth can lead to blind materialism and a loss of quality of life. It is essential to consider the cost to one's well-being when engaging in various activities. Social, psychological, and material deficiencies, particularly amongst the poor, contribute to disparities in health outcomes nationally and globally. Addressing these disparities is often difficult, as an essential yet unrecognised component of quality of life is overlooked. Quality of life is not merely a state of mind or a condition, but rather a relationship between the quality of external conditions and an individual's personal circumstances. It holds intrinsic value and is deeply influenced by the unique qualities of the individual (Hannibal, 2023).

The relationship between well-being, quality of life, and spiritual well-being is complex and multifaceted. Recognising the significance of spiritual well-being and engaging in practices like walking can lead to profound personal transformation, enriching one’s life. This holistic approach to well-being not only benefits individuals personally but also contributes to a greater sense of unity and interconnectedness within society. By acknowledging the vital role of spiritual well-being in shaping quality of life, we can consciously pursue practices that support and elevate this essential dimension of our overall well-being.

5. Methodology: Methods and data collection

This study employed an empirical qualitative research methodology with a sample of 30 walkers. The Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the ethical clearance application for this research. Participants gave their informed consent before the fieldwork was conducted. Primary data were gathered through virtual semi-structured interviews and participant observation, using various digital platforms such as Google Forms, Google Meet, Signal, voice notes, email, and WhatsApp. The sample specifically included individuals who regularly engage in walking, allowing for an in-depth exploration of their motivations and walking styles. When analysing the gender distribution across different age groups (Figure 1), it was observed that 70% of the participants were female, while 30% were male (Figure 2).

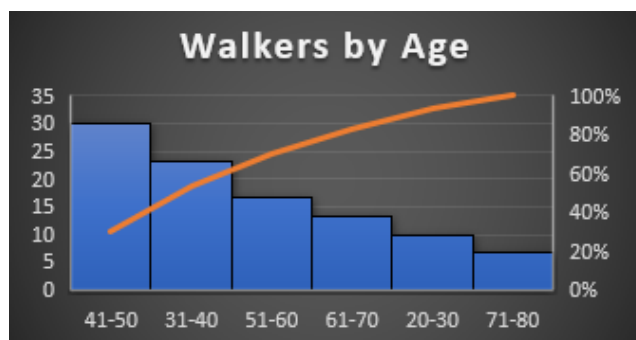


Figure 1: Age

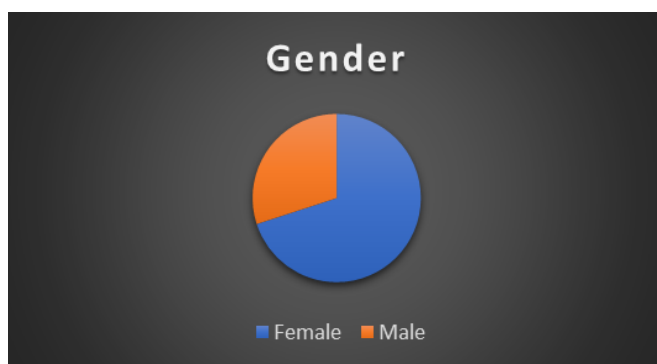


Figure 2: Gender

6. Discussion of findings

The analysis aimed to decompose data into manageable themes, patterns, trends, and relationships, providing a comprehensive understanding of the underlying components through the examination of concepts, constructs, or variables (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). To achieve this, the researcher utilised qualitative content analysis and narrative analysis. The former enables the testing of conceptual problems, measurement of impact, and evaluation of correlations within qualitative data (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Cole, 1988; Krippendorff, 1980). The latter, commonly employed in ethnographic research, focuses on analysing participants' perceptions and experiences derived from interviews, observations, and surveys (Atkinson et al., 2000; Bamberg, 2012). These two methods complement each other effectively within the research framework. The study specifically investigated how a personalised COVID-19 walking trail influenced participants' quality of life and perceptions of well-being. This was aligned with interview questions that asked probing sub-questions related to the effects of walking. It included group interactions and a sense of belonging during the pandemic. Longitudinally, data were collected over several months, with walking sessions occurring at 21-day intervals to track steps and kilometres. To ensure consistency, an interview template was developed, and the data were systematically organised in a database. The analysis process involved identifying themes and trends, employing tools such as pivot tables in Microsoft Excel to filter and organise the data based on various variables.

Introduction: Theological foundation

Walking, as a human act, can be seen as part of the theological mission of caring for the *imago Dei*, the image of the Father is embodied in each person. The Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 3:16–17 that “you are His temple and that His Spirit dwells in you”. This assertion reminds us that the human body is sacred, a vessel of divine presence. Therefore, practises that nurture the body, such as walking and pursuing wellness, can be reframed as sacred acts, expressions of spiritual stewardship. This theological foundation supports the CHESTS model of walking and wellness, where caring, healing, engaging, sympathetic, thinking, and sharing are not merely attributes of healthy individuals, but also of those who honour the divine image within themselves and others.

6.1 Walking: The CHESTS of well-being

In contemporary society, walking continues to be a meaningful practice that embodies various qualities identified by walkers. These qualities - caring, healing, engaging, sympathetic, thinking, and sharing - together form the acronym “CHESTS”. By creating this acronym, I sought to capture the essence of safeguarding and nurturing, highlighting how these attributes contribute to overall well-being. CHESTS embodies the various dimensions of health and wellness experienced through walking, enhancing our holistic understanding of this activity. Walking serves as a spiritual tool (Lucas, 2016), intertwined with diverse discourses and recognised as a purifying practice (Slavin, 2003). It provides individuals with inspiration and intentions (Lucas, 2016).

6.2 The caring walker

Lerner et al. (2005) define “caring” as the expression of sympathetic and empathetic sentiments towards others, highlighting the intrinsic connection between empathy and compassion. Conversely, Conradson (2016) emphasises the critical role that walking plays in self-care, personal development, and fostering balance in body, mind, and spirit. Walking becomes a means for nurturing oneself while cultivating greater self-awareness. This raises important questions about why individuals identify

as “caring walkers”, encouraging a deeper examination of the relationship between walking practices and empathetic dispositions.

“It is good and important to care about one’s health – mentally and physically” (Cedar¹).

The above walker’s concern for their overall well-being is the foundation for their caring nature. This sentiment is supported by Gros (2014), who states: “I need to stop talking and just walk; I need to walk to get my footing to walk my thoughts into the earth. I need to walk for those who do not know another way; I feel compelled to imprint a deeper consciousness of caring into our work and world. I want to walk for myself as well as for those who do not see nor know the origins or purpose of their calling. I have to have time out and just walk”. In theological terms, caring for oneself and others through walking can be seen as a participation in divine compassion. Just as the Father demonstrates care for creation, the walker, embodying care, honours the sacredness of life, their own and that of others, as bearers of His image.

6.3 *The healing walker*

Walking offers pathways to healing and fosters a profound sense of spiritual liberation for those who engage in this practice. Grounded in a spirituality connected to one’s surroundings, commonly referred to as a “spirituality of habitat”, walking not only brings about healing but also evokes a range of feelings, including feelings of levity. This phenomenon arises from the inherent ability to share communal responsibilities with fellow inhabitants of the earth, as proposed by Wuthnow (1998). Several walkers shared their perspectives regarding the therapeutic properties of walking, captured as follows:

“Sometimes it helps to be out in the open to heal some wounds from the day” (Cove).

“My walking helps me stay well and manage stress and anxiety; hence, I choose ‘healing’” (Ocean).

1 Names have been replaced with pseudonyms.

“When I walk, I like to engage with people to find out their reasons for walking and whether I can relate with them” (Sage).

The walkers’ insights highlight the therapeutic implications of walking, suggesting that the activity fosters a sense of healing for the individual. This inference indicates that immersion in outdoor environments, combined with the physical exertion of walking, enhances an individual’s resilience against the emotional turmoil encountered throughout the day. Moreover, the walkers view walking as a beneficial practice that aids in preserving physical health, managing stress, and reducing anxiety. Beyond its physiological benefits, the walkers find satisfaction in interpersonal interactions during their walks, expressing a keen interest in understanding their fellow walkers’ motives and discovering common ground. Such sentiments emphasise the profound significance of social connectivity during walking expeditions, positioning it as a crucial element contributing to their holistic well-being. Healing through walking becomes an act of restoration not only of the body, but also of the soul. In Christian spirituality, healing is often linked to reconciliation with Him, self, and others. As walkers experience healing in nature and community, they mirror the holistic shalom He desires for humanity - wholeness in body, mind, and spirit.

6.4 The engaging walker

Engagement, as suggested by Collins-Kreiner (2010), fosters a comprehensive understanding of social and environmental sustainability, encompassing the collective consciousness towards these vital domains. In the context of walking, engagement evokes a profound *sense of flow* for the walker - an experiential state where temporal constraints dissolve and self-awareness recedes, leaving a heightened focus on the immediate experience. Seligman (2011) states that this concept of “flow” is a cornerstone of positive psychology, describes a state of unmitigated absorption and euphoria in the present moment. Through immersion in activities that identify deeply with personal passions and values, individuals unlock the gateway to wholehearted engagement with the present, thus transcending into the realm of flow (Seligman, 2011). The walkers demonstrated manifestations of well-being through multifaceted engagements, exhibiting a

spectrum of behaviours and interactions that highlighted their holistic state of wellness:

“Engaging – I walk with family members, and use walking as a catch-up session” (Aspen).

“When I walk, I like to engage with people to find out their reasons for walking and whether I can relate with them” (Bay).

These two walking enthusiasts, despite their unique backgrounds, shared a common passion for engaging in the practice of walking. Both walkers articulated their active involvement in walking endeavours, whether embarked upon alone or accompanied by family members. For them, walking transcended mere physical exercise, it served as an avenue for forging meaningful connections and spending quality time with loved ones. Their interactions during walks were characterised by a genuine interest in engaging with fellow walkers, seeking to comprehend their motivations and establish shared experiences. Building upon Dahl’s (1972) proposition that meaningful engagement is vital for human connection, their experiences emphasised the multifaceted nature of leisure, encompassing physical, mental, spiritual, and social dimensions, as elucidated by Andrews (2006). Engagement through walking echoes the biblical notion of walking with Him (cf. Genesis 5:24, Micah 6:8). The walker who engages with creation and community participates in a spiritual rhythm of relationship and attentiveness, fostering a deeper sense of communion with the world and with the divine.

6.5 *The sympathetic walker*

A *sympathetic walker*, also known as an “empathetic walker” or “sensory walker”, describes someone who engages in walking with the intent of experiencing their surroundings through another person’s perspective - essentially “walking in someone else’s shoes”. This concept involves developing a deep understanding and empathy for others’ lived experiences by physically immersing oneself in their environment. While the term “sympathetic walker” may not have widespread usage, researchers, psychologists, and philosophers have extensively explored the concept of cultivating empathy through shared experiences. Bogard (2020) discusses

walking as an intervention tool to promote empathy and connection, highlighting its potential to enhance understanding through shared experiences. The walkers themselves often feel that this practice shapes them into sympathetic walkers, deepening their connection to others:

“Sympathy intertwines deeply with the essence of what walking signifies to me. As I embark on each step of my journey, whether through bustling city streets or serene natural landscapes, I find myself attuned to the subtle rhythms of the world around me” (Storm).

This walker exhibits a profound emotional and cognitive attachment to the practice of walking. For them, walking transcends mere physical exercise, serving as a conduit for connection with their environment, nature, and fellow beings. Each step taken holds personal resonance, offering solace, inspiration, and opportunities for deep introspection. Walking becomes a meditative ritual, a sacred journey of self-discovery and contemplation. Amongst the various qualities associated with walking, the focus here is on the concept of the *sympathetic walker*. To walk sympathetically is to imitate the Creator, who entered into human suffering and walked alongside the marginalised. The act of ‘walking in another’s shoes’ identifies with the incarnational theology of the Father becoming human, sharing in our condition to redeem it. Notably, 75% of the walkers identified themselves as sympathetic walkers, highlighting the cognitive engagement and reflective nature that define their walking experience.

6.6 *The language of a thoughtful walker*

Various scholars present different definitions of walking. Vaillant (2012:45) defines a *thoughtful walker* as “someone who engages in walking while actively contemplating and reflecting on ideas”. According to Vaillant, a thoughtful walker approaches walking with intention and concentration, using the rhythmic motion to stimulate thought. Solnit (2001) highlights the intrinsic connection between walking and thinking, suggesting that the two are deeply intertwined in a relationship of mutual reinforcement. She describes walking as a slow, deliberate movement that naturally fosters reflection, making it an ideal companion for thoughtful contemplation. In this way, walking becomes more than just physical activity - it transforms into a therapeutic practice, offering a process of cleansing and healing.

Terrien (2003:261), whose work aligns with this perspective, views walking as not only a path to gaining wisdom but also as a way of life deeply intertwined with personal growth and reflection. The participants in this research echoed this sentiment, affirming that walking contributed positively to their well-being. They relayed the idea of thinking through walking as follows:

“I use walking to clear my thoughts. It also helps me in decision-making and calms my mind” (Canyon).

“Praying and clear thinking occurs when I walk because I am alone and feel centred. Looking and the sky and my surroundings soothe me. Walking is thinking. Walking is clarity” (Grove).

“Walking at any given time in silence gives me time to think and take a pause during activities” (River).

“When walking, I usually think about a variety of things” (Kai).

“I overthink about things when I walk by myself” (Harbor).

“Because it is noisy in my head! I listen to music to get my thoughts off work, if just for a little while” (Prairie).

“Walking allows time for thinking about all things” (Caspian).

“When I walk, I think of my personal life” (Wren).

“Because I think all the time when walking” (Juniper).

“Walking calms me and helps me to ‘air’ and process my thoughts” (Nova).

The walkers experienced a profound sense of mental clarity and tranquillity during their walking activities. Walking became a medium for channelling their thoughts and contemplating various aspects of their lives. For them, it was not merely a physical exercise but a cognitive process that facilitated self-reflection and nurtured a deeper sense of self. One walker vividly described how walking helped them untangle their thoughts, make decisions, and achieve mental equilibrium. They found solace and a spiritual connection while walking alone, immersed in the calming beauty of nature. For this walker, walking was synonymous with clarity of thought, offering

a moment of pause and reflection amid the chaos of daily life. Despite a tendency to overthink, they found relief from stress and anxiety through the meditative rhythm of walking. Whether using music as a temporary distraction or contemplating personal challenges, walking provided a sanctuary for mental rejuvenation and organisation of thoughts. As Gros (2014:20) aptly states, “Think while walking, walk while thinking, and let writing be but the light pause, as the body on a walk rests in contemplation of wide open spaces”. Thoughtful walking becomes a form of spiritual contemplation. As the Psalmist declares, “I remember you as I pour out my soul... I walk among the throng” (Psalm 42:4). In such walking, the human mind aligns with divine wisdom, and thinking becomes a sacred act, a dialogue with the Spirit within.

6.7 *The sharing walker*

Walking serves as a conduit for physical vitality and mental well-being, fostering a deep connection with the inner self. It not only revitalises the body but also nourishes the spirit, promoting personal growth and symbolising a harmonious unity within oneself. Embracing walking as a peaceful ritual lays the foundation for navigating life’s challenges with resilience and making decisions that align with one’s authentic essence (Hannibal, 2023). Power (2015) explores the concept of “rural walking” as a form of pilgrimage, encompassing traditional elements of the journey, communal exchange of experiences and wisdom, and shared meals along the way. Power emphasises that walkers form meaningful connections by sharing their knowledge and insights during these collective expeditions. This ethos of shared journeying is central to the profound spiritual connections forged through pilgrimage walking, emphasising the significance of arriving at the final destination as a unified collective. The walker identifies as a “sharing walker”, a designation rooted in a multifaceted rationale, as explained as follows:

“I chose sharing because I love sharing and the idea of how walking can change your life. Your health [and] fitness will improve, and it has a great effect [on your] mental [and] emotional state as well” (Koa).

Sharing emerges as a key facet intertwined with the practice of walking or embarking on a pilgrimage. Amidst the quiet reflection, that often defines the journey; subtle gestures of camaraderie - a smile, a nod, or a simple gesture - carry more weight than words. Within this framework, the walker expresses a deep affinity for sharing, motivated by the desire to impart their knowledge and experiences about the transformative power of walking. Opting for the descriptor “sharing”, they aim to convey how walking can profoundly influence one’s physical health, mental well-being, and emotional equilibrium. This belief aligns with their belief in the capacity of walking to bring about meaningful improvements in various aspects of life. Through the act of sharing, they hope to inspire others to embrace walking as a salutary practice. Sharing, at its core, reflects the communal nature of the Trinity and the biblical mandate to bear one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:2). When walkers share their journeys, they enact a theology of companionship, mutual edification, and spiritual solidarity, living out the truth that we are not alone in our pilgrimage of life.

7. Conclusion

In future, further research into the philosophy of walking will deepen our understanding of its role in fostering holistic well-being. By continuing to engage with this discourse, we can uncover new insights and approaches for promoting individualised quality of life through walking.

The exploration of themes in this study reinforces the idea that walking plays a vital role in the shared experiences of walkers. As the impact of walking on overall well-being was examined, it became clear that participants reported many similar experiences across the different categories of the CHESTS framework for well-being. Walking transcends its literal definition; it is more than the physical act of placing one foot in front of the other. It is closely linked to the purpose behind each walker’s engagement in the activity. Walking serves as a tool to clear the mind, bring calm, process thoughts, and facilitate decision-making. Regardless of the specific intention, walking consistently had a positive impact on overall well-being.

Furthermore, the type of walking experienced often involves overcoming obstacles, enduring challenges, and persevering through difficulties to achieve well-being. This journey allows walkers to develop a deeper appreciation for good health and well-being. Thus, walking is deemed essential for maintaining optimal health and well-being.

In addition to its physical benefits, walking fosters a profound connection with the natural world, allowing individuals to appreciate its tranquillity and effortless beauty. While time is a necessary element in any walking journey, it does not hinder the freedom to move forward. Instead, walking empowers individuals to progress, step by step, without succumbing to weariness. This paradoxical nature of walking makes it an essential aspect of well-being.

The discourse surrounding walking encompasses a wide range of topics, including walking as a form of movement, exploration, leisure, and protest. It explores the physical experience, psychological effects, cultural and historical significance, as well as the social and political implications of walking. Throughout history, scholars have shown great interest in the study of walking, exploring its connection to the mind and body, its relationship with nature, its sensory experience, and its impact on overall well-being.

The discourse also considers the conundrum of walking, encompassing the caring, and healing, engaging, sympathetic, thoughtful, and shared experiences of walkers. Ultimately, walking becomes more than a wellness practice; it is a sacred journey of spiritual formation. By walking with care, healing, engagement, sympathy, thoughtfulness, and sharing, individuals honour the divine image within themselves and others. This way of walking nurtures the whole person; body, mind, and spirit and aligns with a theological mission to honour our Creator by honouring the temple of the body. Consequently, the CHESTS framework is not only a model of well-being but also a vision of embodied spirituality rooted in the biblical affirmation of the sacredness of personhood.

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