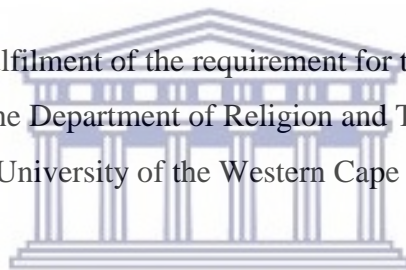


**PILGRIMAGE WALKING AND SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING: A
CASE STUDY OF A PERSONALISED COVID TRAIL IN
CAPE TOWN AND SURROUNDING AREAS**

JANINE HANNIBAL

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy in the Department of Religion and Theology at the
University of the Western Cape



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

Supervisor: Professor Ignatius Swart

Co-supervisor: Professor John Klaasen

April 2023

Declaration

I declare that *Pilgrimage walking and spiritual well-being: A case study of a personalised COVID trail in Cape Town and surrounding areas* is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Janine Hannibal

17 April 2023

Student number: 2266604



Signed



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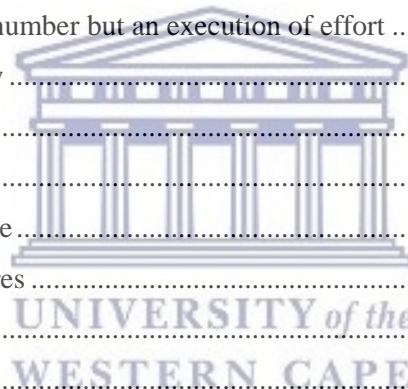
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Abstract

Pilgrimage walking and spiritual well-being: A case study of a personalised COVID trail in Cape Town and surrounding areas

Pilgrimage, walking, as well as pilgrimage walking are not new concepts. The art of walking, putting one foot before the other, creates many opportunities, including ones for hope, healing, and finding solutions to problems and challenges. Despite the global scope of extant research on pilgrimage, the scholarly focus on pilgrimage walking within the South African context is scanty. Much has been written about urban and rural walking as well as pilgrimage in general, though. Pilgrimage within the South African context took on various forms but my research introduced the concept of a steps challenge and mapping out a personalised COVID trail. The aim of my study was to explore pilgrimage walking as an intervention for spiritual well-being by focusing on a personalised COVID-19 pilgrimage in Cape Town and its surrounding areas. My study steered towards determining the correlation between spiritual well-being and pilgrimage walking. I conducted participant and digital observation. Interviews were conducted by means of WhatsApp, voice notes, emails, Zoom, and Google Meet. The idea was to speak to walkers and nature lovers while participating in the said personalised pilgrimage. The study was empirical and descriptive in nature. Components of my research included history, context, current knowledge, theory, and practice. The second section of the research discussed the relationship between pilgrimage walking and spiritual well-being. The fourth section included my case study that is, walking a personalised pilgrimage trail. The project concluded with information based on a walking journal, observation, and recordings about the perceptions of pilgrims walking a personalised trail. The final section closed the project, rendering conclusions and recommendations on the impact of pilgrimage walking on spiritual well-being.

Keywords: walking, pilgrimage walking, spiritual well-being, COVID-19 trail, personalised pilgrimage route, steps challenge, stepping up, autoethnographic study.

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I did not have the opportunity to study after I had completed my matric. As the eldest of five siblings, I had to start working after matric. I always saw studying at university or college as something that was out of my reach and as something that was for somebody else. Writing these acknowledgements brings tears to my eyes. My late father had a vision of me becoming a learned person. I lost my dad at the age of five and, while growing up, his vision for me was just that: a vision, a dream. Looking back, I cannot express in words what this achievement means to me.

Firstly, I thank the Heavenly Father for his grace and mercies bestowed upon my life. His unconditional love carried me through this journey of exploring and discovering. My faith in my Creator gave me hope. On the many occasions where I fell down, my Creator picked me up and restored my faith and ability to move forward.

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I dedicate this study in loving memory to my dad, Christian (Christi) Isaacs, who would have been immensely proud of my achievement.

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Acronyms

CCSA	Corinthian Church of South Africa
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease of 2019
CBD	Central Business District
CDC	Center for Disease Control and Prevention
CEO	The Chief Executive Officer
CVD	Cardio Vascular Diseases
FP	Female Participants
F	Frequency
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IWB	Individual Well-being
MP	Male Participants
NBC	Nazareth Baptist Church
N	Number
NIH	National Institutes of Health
PERMA	Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationship, Meaning, and Purpose, and Accomplishment
P	Pilgrim(s)
QoL	Quality of Life
RaD	Religion and Development
RRV	The initials of the journalist that wrote the specific article
SAHRA	South African Heritage Resources Agency
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UoA	Unit of Analysis
UNDP	United Nations Development Plan
WFMH	World Federation for Mental Health
WHO	World Health Organization
ZCC	Zion Christian Church



Chapter 1

Introduction

I had read in books about the benefits of long walks in the open air, and having liked the advice, I had formed a habit of taking walks, which has still remained with me. These walks gave me a hardy constitution ... When every hope is gone, when helpers fail and comforts flee, I find that help arrives somehow, from I know not where. Supplication, worship, prayer are no superstition; they are acts more real than the acts of eating, drinking, sitting or walking. It is no exaggeration to say that they alone are real, all else is unreal (Mahatma Gandhi, 1949: 8; 37).

1.1 Introduction

Walking occupies a conceptual space in the mind's eye, and this recreational activity will be the centre of the argument to follow, not least since it has been attracting considerable attention among scholars. They have written about walking, defined it, and debated the effect of individual and group walking. Walking is more than the act on foot; it is a slow means of moving on foot, allowing one to think (Solnit, 2001). Gros (2014) refers to it as putting one foot in front of the other, taking one-step at a time (Kagge, 2019). It is associated with the movements caused by a long journey on foot from one location to another (Turner and Turner, 1978), as if one finds oneself outside or within space and time (Watson, 2006).

I have two reasons for pursuing this topic. One reason is because of my pilgrimage in Spain, and the other is because I enjoy nature and walking. In 2017, I walked the well-known St. Frances Way, the Spanish Camino, from Astorga to Santiago de Compostela. As a hiker/walker I had no preconceived thoughts about the journey. It was about the experience and the expansion of my boundaries. I had just completed and submitted my master's thesis, and I was left with an empty feeling of "what now?" This pilgrimage was a challenge and a new chapter in my life. Little did I know, even though the trip was planned, that this journey would have its own challenges and deliverables. My Creator placed me onto the Camino de Santiago to receive spiritual and mental direction by forcing me to deal with the issues of my past.

The Camino in Spain I walked was a pilgrimage route through the mountains of León and the breath-taking Bierzo. My mind was metaphorically a landscape and navigated the path, the journey, and the walk (cf. Solnit, 2001). I could not help but feel a sense of inner strength

growing inside me. My fellow pilgrims and I spent a night in Ponferrada, after which the Camino took us across the heart of the lush region of El Bierzo. In Villafranca, known as “little Compostela,” we visited the garden of the Iglesia de Santiago located on the premises of the St James Church. The church has a “Forgiveness Gate” that only opens during Holy Years. Our next point of interest was Lavacolla, on the outskirts of Santiago, where pilgrims used to wash themselves in the river. This was in preparation for their arrival in Santiago de Compostela. Rows of tall eucalyptus trees line your journey to Monte do Gozo. It was from this point that one caught a first glimpse of the spires of the cathedral in Santiago. We arrived in the city (population of 195,000; City population, n.d.) and stayed at El Albergue Seminario Menor, an old monastery. The South African pilgrims that walked the Spanish Camino with me explored the UNESCO World Heritage Site’s architecture in the wonderful atmosphere of this spiritual and cultural city. We walked through the city in Santiago for the pilgrim mass. At the Santiago Cathedral, we received our pilgrimage stamp for the completion of our journey.

The Spanish Camino was the inspiration for my research. I wanted to explore similar experiences of pilgrimage walking in the South African context. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and the initial South African lockdown of March 2020 made it impossible for me to travel. I had to reassess my purpose and objectives. I also had to rethink my title, and the subsequent section of the present text will explain how I arrived at exploring pilgrimage walking and spiritual well-being of a personalised COVID trail in Cape Town and its surrounding areas. The personalised COVID route was a walk that could be undertaken from any location, both indoors and outdoors.

During the initial three weeks of lockdown, when one was not able to freely move around, was traumatising for me as a walker, hiker, and nature lover. I am a free-spirited human being and enjoy the simple things in life. Spirituality can be experienced on a deeper level when one enjoys simplicity. Collins-Kreiner (2010) discusses spiritual walking as an instrument for fostering communities of passion. The simplicity and humble act of walking outdoors without technological influences or disturbances nurture the capacity to care for others. This deed of selflessness expands the walker’s ability and respect for the environment. Not being able to walk in nature and do a bit of urban walking was daunting, not only on my body, but also on my soul. I have tried Youtube walking, walking in my lounge, and walking up and down my stairs, but was still left with a sense of deprivation. My soul feeds off open spaces, clean air, and silence. Think while walking, walk while thinking, and let writing be but the light pauses,

as the body on a walk rest in contemplation of wide open spaces (Gros, 2014). After three weeks, I got a bit daring; walking around the house in order to feed my body and soul but, still, it was not enough. The confined space and limited walking left me with a feeling of distress. Watching and reading the news of COVID-19 infections and deaths fuelled this distress. My spirit felt insecure, and my body retaliated. My sleeping patterns changed. I would be awake until two o' clock in the morning, fall asleep, and sleep until midday. My digestive system became irregular: for many days, I would go without relief and I felt bloated. I experienced headaches, my body was in shock, and it felt weak and unresponsive.

Restrictions and curfews changed from level five to level four, which meant that one could walk from 6 am to 9 am every day. I had to prepare my body to wake up earlier so as not to miss the opportunity to walk. Never was I as excited to be able to walk; getting up earlier became my new norm. The ritual became effortless. The five weeks of lockdown and the confined space of exercising were forgotten. My soul was happy and my body reacted positively. However, I am a nature lover and the novelty of being able to walk five km soon vaporized. Working remotely made walking with the restricted times challenging, as I had deadlines and the restricted times did not always suit my routine. I needed more: my soul, spirit, and body needed more to be happy and well. Walking is the product of a distinct part of the soul (Cleanthes, n.d). My well-being was driven by my walking, hiking, and physical exercises. Then the announcement came that we were allowed to hike, and I was excited. I could walk in the mountains, feel the sun on my skin, talk to my Creator, listen to the peacefulness of nature, and experience a sense of freedom.

Walking has been a part of human existence since the beginning of time, and various scholars have identified its characteristics. It gradually became fragmented, circumscribed, and limited. The act of going on foot became confined to a specific historical time, condition, society, and culture. Like waving, smiling, and greeting, walking belonged to the history of gesture. Walking presented the walker to the world. Walking, spirituality, well-being, and the impact of walking on Qol are all interconnected. Walking helps the walker to get in touch with our bodies and the world around us without distraction (Solnit, 2001:1-4). Between 1913 and 1914, hiking/ walking was used as a strategic tool in Germany to win the consensus of young people with disciplinary challenges (Williams, 2007:8-18). Over the last two decades, there has been considerable growth in the number of individuals visiting long-established religious shrines globally. New sites were established by those functioning beyond religious institutions (Eade,

2020:1). A personalised COVID trail narrates the story of the impact of walking on an individual's overall well-being. The steps challenge was a personalised trail that enhanced the walking and pilgrimage journey.

The aim of my study was to explore pilgrimage walking as an intervention for spiritual well-being, with special focus on a “personalised” COVID pilgrimage trail in Cape Town and its surrounding areas. This includes districts such as Overberg, Westcoast, False Bay (see Chapters 5 and 6), Stellenbosch, Drakenstein, Witzenberg, Breede Valley and Langeberg (see Chapter 7). Spiritual well-being is a dimension that is instrumental for enhancing quality of life (QoL) and promoting human development. My study steered towards determining the correlation between spiritual well-being and pilgrimage walking. The idea was to evaluate participants' opinions about the impact of pilgrimage walking on the quality of their lives. Philosophers and scholars such as Thoreau, Nietzsche, and Kant interpreted and discussed the fundamentals of walking. These authors were firm believers that humans could achieve and resolve much through the act of walking. Rousseau and Nietzsche walked to think. Kant walked through his town at the same time daily to escape the “compulsion of thought” (Gros, 2014). The field of pilgrimage walking and spiritual well-being of a personalised COVID trail constituted the broader theoretical frame of reference within which the study was undertaken.

1.2 Theoretical framework

Pilgrimage, walking, well-being, pilgrimage walking, spirituality, and QoL are all concepts that should not be viewed in exclusion. All these concepts are interconnected, and the act of participation is of fundamental importance not only to individuals' embodied existence but also to their spirit.

1.2.1 Pilgrimage is a practice

Pilgrimage is acknowledged as being among the social and spiritual practices commonly known to human society. It is an essential feature of the religions of the world, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity (Barber, 1993:1). Scholars have sporadically described a pilgrimage as a voyage of religious causes, generally to a holy place, explicitly for purification rituals and spiritual comprehension (Basu, 2004; Morinis, 1992; Dubisch, 1995).

Müller (2011:7-11) relates pilgrimage to its impact on the body. The interpretation of pilgrimage in South Africa has been linked to travelling from an urban area to a rural-based

sacred centre. Traveling by bus, car, and minibus provided an opportunity to partake in a pilgrimage to a spiritual site. The travel by bus, car, and minibus was the physical travel used to describe this mode of transportation. Physical travelling has triggered the possibility of travelling from urban to rural destinies and vice versa. The Zion Christian Church (ZCC) pilgrimage has provided a similar opportunity to people, identified by Victor and Edith Turner in connection with the European pilgrimage of an earlier age. The ZCC pilgrimage has been a form of ritual activity. Pilgrimage has been a neglected ritual in the study of African religions. Pentecostal ZCC is a travelling church and pilgrimage sacred centres were associated with travelling and not walking (Newell, 1980).

Research conducted by Roos on the “inner journey” of pilgrimage in South Africa and the modern world includes a variety of pilgrimage experiences. According to Roos, “meaning is negotiable in pilgrimage. Even within single ‘types’ of pilgrimages, such as those of veneration, or healing, or initiation, there are multiple intentions among the participants.” Roos examines whether the manner of pilgrimage is more important than the intent (2016:1, 5).

1.2.2 Walking entails more than placing one foot in front of another

Various scholars have different definitions of walking. Solnit (2001) found the ideology of walking and thinking to be embedded in a relationship of mutual understanding. Solnit is of the opinion that the two variables are fine companions. She alludes to walking as a slow means of moving on foot, allowing one to think. Walking, therefore, is therapeutic: it is a process of cleansing and healing. Terrien (2003:261), who also relates to such an understanding, similarly refers to the act of walking not only as a connection to the experience of wisdom but also as a way of life.

Watson (2006:290) sees walking as taking an inventory of one’s life by means of the simple acts of stopping to pace oneself, pausing, and reflecting. Sen (1999) defines it as an assessment of the quality of one’s life, while Gros, in self-assessment, writes:

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 (2014).

1.2.3 The principles of walking for well-being

It is a proven fact that walking influences one's well-being. Several researchers have reported the benefits of walking on individual and collective well-being. Walking has been found to be a low-cost and effective type of physical activity that can prevent cardiovascular diseases (WHO, 2012; Boone-Heinonen *et al.*, 2009), combat obesity (Morabia and Costanza, 2004; Pucher *et al.*, 2010), and alleviate signs of depression (WFMH, 2012; Robertson *et al.*, 2012; Armstrong and Edwards, 2004). The social and physical environment influence whether a person is open to the idea of walking (Sallis, Owen and Fisher, 2015). Natural conditions improve one's well-being (Marselle, Irvine, and Warber, 2013:5604). Walking in natural environments improves mental well-being more than walking indoors (Bowler *et al.*, 2010; Thompson Coon *et al.*, 2011). Walking alone in nature increases psychological and emotional well-being (Hartig *et al.*, 2003; Berman, Jonides, and Kaplan, 2008).

1.2.4 Becoming a pilgrim

Pilgrims receive pilgrimage status by either walking, cycling, or horse riding. Other modes of travel, such as driving, do not qualify individuals as pilgrims. The cathedral authorities in Santiago, for instance, only accept people who walked, cycled, or rode a horse as pilgrims (Slavin, 2015:3). Dennet makes a direct connection between pilgrimage and pilgrimage walking. He argues that walking is the greatest, if not the only, meaningful method to complete a pilgrimage. Walking is differentiated from other modes of travel, particularly the car or bus. Walking completes a one-of-a-kind pilgrimage experience. The intensity of the pilgrimage is fundamental to its significance (Dennet, 1997).

Traditional pilgrimage walking is associated with penance and endurance. There is, for instance, a prevailing tendency in religious traditions to treat hardship as an authentic and even compulsory part of the pilgrimage process. In the case of Christianity, the hardship of the Camino offers a good example. The long pilgrim path to Santiago de Compostela in Spain emphasises the importance of walking the route rather than taking modern transportation. The hundreds of kilometres take its toll on the stamina of pilgrims, testing the walkers' patience and endurance. Pilgrimage walking is a physical activity on foot that occurs within an urban and rural environment that occurs outdoors and in nature. Pilgrimage walking, as a form of physical activity performed on foot in a specific setting, exposes participants to an increase in health and well-being (Maddrell, 2013:68).

The act of pilgrimage walking is open to anyone. The pilgrimage route for a specific area is specified, but there are no restrictions or preconditions for how it should be completed. The pilgrimage itself focuses on the pilgrim's experiences along the "Way." The experience during the journey is defined as the "Way." It is about the experience, the path, walking a unique route and finding the inner self (Cohen, 1979).

1.2.5 A Southern African perspective of pilgrimage

Pilgrimage is a relatively new concept in Africa. Even though the idea of pilgrimage is traditionally linked to a religious journey, the modern ideology of pilgrimage is becoming an exploring initiative in Africa. The modern pilgrimage philosophy seeks to adhere to the old definition of pilgrimage to some extent. Furthermore, due to a number of variables, it deviates significantly from a traditional pilgrimage. The deviation from a traditional pilgrimage is because of factors such as a lack of infrastructure, challenges with safety, and so on. However, only limited extant literature focuses on pilgrimages in Africa and South Africa. In Southern Africa, pilgrimages are becoming increasingly popular. There is some form of connection between pilgrimage in Southern Africa, hope, and the expression in faith. Hope and faith have been common attributes of the Christian tradition. Religion is nurtured by our worldview and set of beliefs. According to Brain and Denis, popular religion is influenced by one's philosophical and cultural background. Pilgrimage is seen as one of the attributes of the "spirit of regime." A religious regime is a regulated and organised spiritual element within pilgrimage. The "regime spirit," which can be viewed in a variety of ways, is the component that regulates and organises the spiritual element (1999:295-296). Marian shrines in Mariannhills (KwaZulu Natal) are thought to be associated with the spirit of the regime. Many Marian shrines are found in Southern Africa, where pilgrims flock annually to honour Mary. This is done to honour Mary's divine maternity and her cooperation in the salvation of humanity. Teaching pilgrims about Mary is one of the main functions of a Marian shrine. This, despite the fact that crime and political instability contributed to a significant decline in the number of pilgrims attending Marian sanctuaries in the last 15 fifteen years or so. The decline in numbers of pilgrims attending the sanctuaries has not affected the spirituality of pilgrims. While devoted Christians took a pilgrimage as a moment of grace, villains saw it as an opportunity to commit crime (Brain and Denis, 1999:305 Traditional pilgrimages, as stated at the outset of this section, are not possible to pursue due to a number of circumstances. These circumstances make a pilgrimage in South Africa difficult to pursue or to complete. When people wish to go on a pilgrimage, one of the things to consider is safety.

Du Plooy (2016: iii) points out that South Africa has many pilgrimages and different ways of pursuing a pilgrimage route. In the public imagination, South Africa has two major pilgrimages. The one is that of the ZCC to Moria and the second that of the Nazareth Baptist Church (NBC) to Mount Nhlankakazi. Perfunctory internet searches reveal photographs of hundreds of thousands of devotees making their way by bus and on foot to the respective pilgrimage destinations (Du Plooy, 2016:1). Some pilgrimages are formal and organised and attract people from everywhere, while others are informal and domestic where people travel short distances. The ZCC Easter pilgrimage to Moria near Polokwane (Müller, 2011), the NBC sacred journey up the Nhlankakazi mountain in KwaZulu-Natal (Becken, 1968), and the annual gathering at Mlazi of the Corinthian Church of South Africa (CCSA) (KwaZulu-Natal) (Wepener & Ter Haar 2014; Wepener *et al.* 2019) serve as examples of organised religious pilgrimages in South Africa.

Du Plooy further includes the Mantsopa, Mautse, and Motouleng routes, which allow a multisite ethnographic study of pilgrimages to the sacred sites of the Eastern Free State province. His study describes pilgrimages to Mantsopa, Mautse, and Motouleng, and explains the reasons for the fact that pilgrims commission these pilgrimages. Each of these routes caters for a different set of customers with completely different requirements and fundamentally different ideals (Du Plooy, 2016:174).

A few further pilgrimages such as the Tankwa, Namaqua, Cape Camino, and the Abbot Francis Camino are organised as hiking/ walking expeditions. De Klerk mentions in his dissertation that there are several organised pilgrimages in South Africa. The Tankwa-Camino is organised twice a year in the Karoo. Reformed congregations also organise their own pilgrimages. The Dutch Reformed Congregations at Prieska and Sedgfield are further examples of organised pilgrimages. These local congregations visit each other and each church prepares prayer stations along their respective pilgrimage routes. This information was published in *Kerkbode* (De Klerk), the official newspaper of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (2016:5). Further pilgrim-related recent events are religious gatherings over Easter weekend when, for instance, the Dutch Reformed Church of Prieska and Sedgfield in South Africa arrange religious gatherings (Kerkbode, 2016).

Furthermore, De Klerk's 2018 "Long Walk Project" may also be considered as an example of a Southern African pilgrimage. The Long Walk Project's goal is to connect with current and future entrepreneurs, as well as raise awareness about the significance of creating new

entrepreneurial attitudes (see also Chapter 2). Yet another pilgrimage that can be found in Southern Africa is the Pilgrimage of Hope. Most of the features of a conventional pilgrimage are represented in the Pilgrimage of Hope. The HOPE Project, which includes a pilgrimage, aims to identify long-term answers to some of South Africa and Africa's most significant problems (Communitas, n.d.). Unlike the Caminos located in the rest of the world, to participate in the Tankwa, Namaqua, Baviaans, Cape Camino, and the Pilgrimage of Hope, a person needs to register and reserve a space by paying to secure it. Pilgrimages such as the Shikoku pilgrimage in Japan, Camino de Santiago in Spain, the Portuguese Camino, and the Celtic Camino in Ireland are open to anyone at any time. Most of the South African Caminos or pilgrimages are rendered exclusive by registration or reservation.

1.2.6 The walker's perspective of spirituality

Although academic discussion of spirituality is not unique, the goal of this research is to explore meanings of spirituality and well-being in relation to walking. Spiritual walking is a unique experience. Spiritual walking is a spiritual or religious practice in which a person makes a journey to a sacred place (Slavin, 2003). The end objective is meaningful and fulfilling whether spiritual well-being is experienced individually or jointly. Kneen (1990:67) concludes that spirituality entails respect for the earth and harmony with nature. She discusses the sun, moon, plants, and animals as part of nature that share gifts of nourishment with human beings. Tisdell (2003:81) refers to spirituality as a journey towards wholeness, and Devereux and Carnegie (2006:48) confirm that, in the scope of today's hyper-modern world, secularism and spirituality coexist more naturally in the future, as borders seem saturated. This entails that, when one considers the idea of pilgrimage and its relationship to well-being, the individual's comprehension should exist at a meta-level that combines the secular and spiritual.

1.2.7 Value of quality of life

Although human beings' basic needs are all the same, the QoL enjoyed by them is related to perception and is subjective. The understanding of possibilities available to one is affected by one's quality of life. This is what scholars have said about the perception of QoL. The World Health Organisation's definition of QoL focuses on the overall perception of an individual's role in life. This relates to their objectives, interests, beliefs, and concerns. This design addresses many of the critical areas of life that encourage people to meet their expectations, such as the psychological and spiritual dimensions (Saxena and Orley, 1997). QoL includes how well human needs are met, or the extent to which individuals or groups experience

happiness or disappointment in specific areas of life (Papachristou and Rosas Casals, 2015:3). QoL descriptions are as varied and contradictory as the methods used to measure it. Andrews (1974) relates it to the extent to which enjoyment and happiness define humanity. Calman (1984) contends that QoL can only be interpreted and measured in terms of individuality. Although the components that comprise QoL are subjective, a manner by which participants of the personalised COVID trail and pilgrimage develop their own meanings may be a more suitable measure of it. Calman describes an individual's QoL as the difference between perception and reality (1984:124).

The interpretation of QoL differs from person to person and has changed over time. Aspirations for QoL are intimately connected to people's relationships with their surroundings. Evaluations of people's QoL are made within horizons of the possibilities they see for themselves and are therefore a fundamental part of their identity (Hofstede, 1984:1240-1241).

Debates and discussions about well-being are not a new occurrence (Dag Hammarskjöld Report, 1975) and are today acknowledged as crucial components of human development (UNDP, 1990:10). The well-being experienced through walking in the cold originates partly from that feeling of a small stove burning in your vitals. According to Gros, the first energy you sense when walking is your own, the energy of your moving body. When you walk, you get a constant and visible glow. In other words, walking makes you feel alive (Gros, 2014:103-104). The concept of well-being involves much more than revenue or remuneration. Narayan *et al.* (2000:38) breaks well-being down into different particles and the perception of many. Many experience spiritual life and religious observation as intertwined ideas of well-being. The state of well-being is also an important component of development.

1.3 Research problem and objectives

Walking, pilgrimage, as well as pilgrimage walking has been documented globally by different scholars. They assert that walking is a form of redemption. It is a journey not to escape life but for life not to escape us. Walking creates a sense of mental and physical well-being. It salvages one's soul and develops your person. It is a concept of sharing. Walking and hiking are not bound to a specific age, spirituality, or well-being. You do not have to be of a certain age, possess a certain spiritual appreciation, or possess a certain form of well-being. It is not restricted to race, gender, or culture. It is for everyone to find his or her way and destination.

The significance of this research project lies in the way it complements the existing scholarly knowledge of pilgrimage walking and its effect on a person's QoL. My research should serve as an inspiration to the general population, walkers, hikers, and nature lovers. Many walkers or hikers are in search of something transcendental or spiritual. Every person participating in the walking journey is in one way or another searching for something. This includes people from different walks of life trying to find themselves, trying to achieve similar goals, and reach the same destination. That destination constitutes a diversion, a relief from one's day-to-day rituals and routine. Any person, young or old, can participate in the art of walking.

The research problem of this study is in the main of scientific and intellectual interest and centres on a practical concern. Despite global coverage and a plethora of writings about pilgrimage, research on pilgrimage walking within the South African context is scanty. Nevertheless, much has been written about urban and rural walking as well as pilgrimage within the global context. Pilgrimage within the South African context has various connotations. For some, "pilgrimage" refers to visiting different congregations by travelling to experience a weekend of prayer. Sacred sites become personal, and are not viewed in terms of a fixed definition as presented in scholarly writings within the global context. Pilgrimage is a relatively new concept in South Africa. The development of pilgrimage routes in Cape Town and the surrounding areas is difficult due to a lack of infrastructure and safety concerns, as previously discussed. Because of established routes and infrastructure, global pilgrimages by foot are more accessible. Pilgrimage walking entails walking from one town to the next or from one village to the next for hours to reach the end destination, which will be a sacred site.

The initial aim of my study was to explore pilgrimage walking as an intervention for spiritual well-being with focus on the Abbot Pfanner Trappist Trail pilgrimage in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa. However, with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant restrictions and lockdowns of 2020, I had to change my focus and objective in terms of what turned out to be possible and meaningful in the new restricted context. I therefore changed my focus and objective to exploring the perceptions among participants walking a personalised COVID trail and the effect of pilgrimage walking on their QoL. The idea was to introduce the concept and practice of pilgrimage walking to people who enjoyed walking in South Africa. It is something that should be accessible to every person interested in pursuing a pilgrimage walk. The reality is that you are only familiar with the concept of pilgrimage walking if you belong to a certain community. Due to this, many are excluded from the joys

and experiences of pilgrimage walking. Books and information on pilgrimage walking in South Africa for the researcher were limited and it was challenging to find access to these. Therefore, the study's purpose became an attempt to speak into this lacuna. According to Babbie and Mouton (2005), the unit of analysis (UoA) covers the “what” of your research: for example, which element, phenomenon, entity, procedure (see Appendix 1), or occurrence might be investigated to produce a comprehensive overview of the different elements mentioned, which refers to the UoA. In this study, the UoA centres on perceptions among participants participating in a personalised pilgrimage to determine how “pilgrimage walking” contributed to their QoL. For the purpose of this study, the research goals targeted and evaluated a specific group of people.

The purpose of my research was to explore perceptions amongst participants exploring a personalised COVID trail and how pilgrimage walking contributed to their QoL. The objectives of this study therefore included the following aspects:

1. To explore the impact of pilgrimage walking on spiritual well-being.
2. To investigate participants' perceptions of pilgrimage walking.
3. To explore how pilgrimage walking contributed or improved QoL among participants' walking personalised COVID-19 trails.

1.4 Research design and methodology

Scholars such as Kothari (2004:2) explain that the purpose of research is to provide information about questions through the execution of scientific methodologies. Kothari defines research as the main objective of the methodology of the study. It allows the study to discover facts that are unknown and have not yet been discovered. The two pillars of science are logic and observation. A scientific understanding of the world must (1) make sense and (2) correspond with what we observe. Both elements are essential to research and relate to three major aspects of the overall research enterprise: theory, data collection, and data analysis (Babbie, 2001:10). As stated, this study performs empirical research, including ethnographic and autoethnographic research, and is qualitative in nature.

Babbie and Mouton acknowledge that the empirical testing of the hypothesis (2001) drives research. Empirical research contributes something new and unique to the academic realm in one way or the other. The present study verified facts by using a scientific method of exploring

and analysing data. As indicated, my original study was to explore the effect of pilgrimage walking experienced by participants on the Pfanner Trappist trail, located in Mariannhill, KwaZulu Natal. The purpose was to establish the effect of pilgrimage walking on the spiritual well-being of participants, while I was to act as a participatory observer. The location of my fieldwork and research had to deviate to another location. The reason for this was the global pandemic caused by COVID-19, which made it impossible for me to conduct my research in KwaZulu-Natal. The different levels of lockdown restricted citizens from freely moving around. However, these restrictions were not exclusive to South Africa; it was a global occurrence. Due to the spreading of the virus, restrictions were enforced and imposed at any time, which meant that you could not make and execute any plans. This was the reason for the change in the location of the core of my study. The traditional and conventional way of walking a pilgrimage was taboo and not on the table for my study any longer. A combination of global uncertainties and the need for the conventional way of doing things created many challenges around conducting the required empirical research. The challenge for me was to seriously try to figure out a way forward. I had to think of what to do and how to do it within the limitations and boundaries created by COVID.

This study undertook qualitative research, which includes research that does not seek to determine its findings by means of a numerical model or interpretation. Qualitative research usually includes interviews and observations without quantitative calculation (Marczyk, DeMatteo, and Festinger, 2005:17). The qualitative approach to analysis concerns the subjective evaluation of views, beliefs, and behaviours. Study in such a situation is engendered by observations and the experiences of the researcher. Such an approach to study takes place in a non-quantitative context and is not subject to rigorous quantitative analysis. The methods of focus group interviews, projective techniques, and in-depth interviews are generally used (Kothari, 2004:5). Babbie and Mouton (2005:108) determined that, ultimately, all fieldwork culminates in the analysis and interpretation of some set of data, be it quantitative survey data, experimental recordings, historical and literary texts, qualitative transcripts, or discursive data.

The primary data utilised for this study were newly collected information. The term ethnography belongs to the discipline of anthropology. Ethnography provides the descriptive data on which cultural anthropology is based. It entails observing the manner of life of a human community, which is considered a process. The historical overview of a scientific approach defines this process of observation (Wolcott, 1975:112). Ethnography is identified as cultural

anthropologic information generated by observational data on behaviour in a specific society or societal domain.

According to Gornick (2001:89), self-narrative writing has become increasingly used in scientific discourse. Three decades ago, those who believed they had a story to share sat down to compose a narrative. Through use of autoethnography as a research tool, it became common across a wide range of academic areas, such as anthropology, communication, education, leadership, management, nursing, religious studies, social work, sociology, performing arts, and many other disciplines. Autoethnographers use their personal experiences as primary source material (data) for social research. They rely on autobiographical material such as memories, mementos, personal documents, official records, images, interviews with others, and ongoing self-reflective and self-observational memoranda (Chang, 2013:108). For the sake of this work, the autoethnographer focused on personal walking experiences.

Research methods are understood as all methods/ techniques used to perform research (Kothari, 2004:7), and each method is intended to conduct specific research. The primary method of my ethnographic and autoethnographic study includes participant observation, observational research methods, and interview responses (Williams, 2007). Following Williams (2007) participant observation can be understood as a type of observational research method. Observations were recorded through field notes, screenshots of participants' posts and comments, and external web pages that the participants shared or linked up with in their respective Facebooks (cf. Koteyko and Hunt, 2016:63).

The traditional and conventional way or method of collecting data under normal circumstances would have been to walk a specific pilgrimage, introduce oneself to participants/ pilgrims, and explain what the study entailed in order to obtain the person's consent. This would have been followed straightforwardly by a semi-structured interview or interviews with the person(s) or pilgrim(s) to collect data. The COVID pandemic made everything challenging, however, and new ways had to be found to conduct the research. I had to become creative to investigate the core purpose or idea of the study. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were complimented with digital tools or methods. Different digital methods were used to collect data. The digital tools included WhatsApp, WhatsApp calls, voice notes, Telegram, Google meet/ Zoom conversations, and e-mails. A sample size of 53 participants was collected. It involved a personalised pilgrimage walk conducted over a prolonged period, from 2020 to 2021.

1.5 Significance of the study

It is claimed by the researcher that the body of knowledge is significantly expanded by this investigation into walking, pilgrimage walking, and a personalised COVID-19 trail. The ideas and topical issues covered are ones that examine an applicable research approach in the context of South Africa. With regard to creativity and adaptability, the research approach establishes a new benchmark. The goal of the study is to demonstrate creativity and adaptability in light of COVID-19 circumstances. With the difficulties brought about by COVID-19, the approach has been to establish a new trend and method of conducting research related to the topical focus.

The study's relevance extends beyond its use as a tool for knowledge generation. It takes its rightful place in an interdisciplinary conversation involving topics like religion, science, and development. Furthermore, pastoral care, spirituality, and religion are variables studied from a social development interest, along with an applied undertaking that maps out different pilgrimages in order to explore their spiritual significance.

1.6 Ethical considerations

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. This included their consent for the recordings in WhatsApp calls, Google meetings, and Zoom meetings. Participants were also assured that their responses, whether recorded or written, would be used solely for the purpose of this doctoral study. The true identities of those who were interviewed were kept anonymous, which is reflected in the discussion of the empirical findings in the thesis. Any names given in the discussion are pseudonyms.

I made a deliberate effort to explain the goals and purpose of my study to the participants. Before the commencement of the interviews, participants had the opportunity to ask questions for clarity. Participants were also given an information sheet that explained the study's goal and how the data would be used. Participants were made aware of this, as well as the fact that they might opt out of the study at any time. Participants' information was treated with the strictest confidentiality, and they were promised their identities would be concealed. They were told that the information acquired would not hurt them and would not benefit or disadvantage anyone in the study. Participation was completely voluntary and occurred without any

expectation of monetary compensation. Sensitivity to differences relating to culture, disability, race, sex, religion, and sexual orientation was upheld.

1.7 Chapter outline

This thesis is organised and structured in eight chapters. The following outline represents a brief summary of each chapter.

Chapter 1: Introduction

In this chapter, I provide the background and motivation for the project as well as the theoretical framework steering the further development of my discussion. At the core of the chapter, furthermore, is the description of the research problem and objectives of the research followed by an outline of the research design and methodology that was used to execute the research. An ethical statement is also presented, given the empirical scope of the study.

Chapter 2: Exploring the nexus between pilgrimage, walking, and pilgrimage walking

Contemporary pilgrimage and pilgrimage walking are relatively new concepts in South Africa. The aim of the chapter is to discuss and clarify concepts and definitions centred on pilgrimage as well as the attributes of pilgrimage. This chapter highlights the significance of the difference between a traditional and modern pilgrimage. It also includes contemporary international perspectives on pilgrimage and international opportunities for pilgrimage. The ultimate purpose of this chapter is to elucidate the nexus between different ideologies about pilgrimage, walking, and pilgrimage walking.

Chapter 3: Footprint of spirituality on well-being and quality of life

This chapter reviews the literature on spiritual well-being and QoL. The discussion complements the discussion in chapter 2. International perspectives on spirituality, well-being, qualities of well-being, factors influencing QoL, and perceptions of QoL are explored. Special attention is given to the PERMA model of Martin Seligman, which involves the five “pillars of well-being.” The chapter concludes with a summary of the most noteworthy discoveries related to these topical issues.

Chapter 4: Walking a personalised COVID trail: Research design and methodology

The research design and methodologies that guided my empirical investigation is the subject of this chapter, as well as my data collection procedure. I explain why I chose a particular

method and why alternative methods were not appropriate for my research. In addition, I elaborate on the way in which my particular methodological choice contributes to new knowledge and understanding.

Chapter 5: Walking the COVID trail: A case study

This chapter marks the start of the discussion of the research findings engendered by qualitative exploration. The personalised walking community's demographic statistics are presented. This is followed by a discussion of the research participants' thoughts on walking a personalised journey. Every participant had a personalised experience, which is described and discussed in the chapter.

Chapter 6: Stepping it up: The personalised steps and kilometres

This chapter builds on the previous one and provides insight into exploring perceptions of participants walking a personalised COVID trail through a steps challenge. The steps challenge was intended to encourage individuals to stay active during COVID and the initial lockdown. A WhatsApp group was a platform where the project was administered and monitored. Participants were required to track their steps and post their amount of steps on a WhatsApp group. The personalised steps and kilometres formed part of the development of a personalised COVID trail for pilgrimage walking and spiritual well-being. Various themes related to experiences of individual well-being are explored in this chapter, including the act of movement, ability to move footsteps in a sequence, encouragement to extend one's boundaries, a sense of association, and the purpose of a personalised journey.

Chapter 7: My STEDRA-WITBREL journey: An Autoethnographic perspective

The autoethnographic perspective of a participatory observation journey is explored in this chapter by way of storytelling. It focuses on the several routes my fellow participants and I undertook across the Cape Winelands District, spanning five municipal areas. As both a participant and a participant observer, I discuss the experiences of meaning, purpose, and accomplishment that emerged from the journey, which I refer to as my Stellenbosch-Drakenstein-Witzenberg-Breede Valley-Langeberg (STEDRA-WITBREL) pilgrimage. Every step I took, every kilometre I walked, tells a different story, encompassing a different version of my experience. This is not someone else's story, nor is it a story I have read about or witnessed; it is my own.

Chapter 8: Pilgrimage walking and spiritual well-being: Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter begins by offering a summary of the main findings of the research. The study's empirical and conceptual contributions in examining a personalised COVID trail and how pilgrimage walking contributed to participants' QoL are set out in brief detail. The chapter answers the research question and addresses the research objectives. Chapter 8 emphasises the study's main contributions and discusses any limitations or weaknesses centred on it. Recommendations for future research are presented.



Chapter 2

Exploring the nexus between pilgrimage, walking, and pilgrimage walking

2.1 Introduction

Pilgrimage, walking, and pilgrimage walking are not unique concepts. A pilgrimage is a meaningful journey undertaken into a mysterious terrain to discover or rediscover yourself, others, and nature, or to find peace within yourself. However, a pilgrimage can be undertaken in different ways and by different means. Medieval pilgrimages continue today: this is pilgrimage on foot. However, modern ways are increasingly used, including different methods of transportation, to reach pilgrimage sites.

The first section of this chapter will provide an historical perspective on different religions. The aim is to discuss and clarify concepts and definitions centred on pilgrimage as well as the attributes of pilgrimage. Scholarly articles on the definition of walking will be demonstrated. The relationship between walking and well-being will be explored. An overview of pilgrimage walking will be discussed.

Contemporary pilgrimage and pilgrimage walking are relatively new concepts in South Africa. Literature about pilgrimage walking in South Africa will highlight the significance of the difference between a traditional and modern pilgrimage. This chapter will also include contemporary international developments on pilgrimage and international opportunities for pilgrimage. The purpose of this chapter is to elucidate the nexus between different ideologies about pilgrimage, walking, and pilgrimage walking.

2.2 Pilgrimage: an historical perspective

In order to understand and comprehend pilgrimage walking, the study needs to explore debates around the history of pilgrimage. The study needs to explore a variety of debates and topics in order to follow the significance of pilgrimage from a global viewpoint and within the global community. This section will address the medieval origins of pilgrimage and look at different religions and how they perceive pilgrimage. This will include Muslim pilgrimage (*Hajj*), Buddhist pilgrimage, and the Indian (Hindu) pilgrimage.

2.2.1 Origins of pilgrimage (medieval)

The concept of pilgrimage is ancient. Stopford (1999:137) suggests that pilgrimages were not imposed on penitents until the sixth century, when the Irish missionaries transformed the whole notion of penance. The Irish confessor instituted repentances, which differed in relation to the seriousness of the sin in compliance with a ritualistic tariff. So many instituted repentances were still in existence at the end of the sixth era. Pilgrimage was much favoured by the Irish as a spiritual experience. The pilgrimage to Santiago as with the Irish pilgrimages always differed from the other major Christian pilgrimages: a pilgrim went to Jerusalem or Rome in search of the holy places in those cities. Here pilgrimage entails arriving at the relics, while the pilgrimage nonetheless was always about the pilgrimage itself, unlike Middle Age pilgrims. Middle Age pilgrims were centred on repentance, the efficient prayers of the saint, and spiritual devotion. Today's pilgrims often fly and seek spiritual devotion as well as other aspects. A few of them walk as travellers for the sake of environment, society, heritage, architecture, or art. Many walk seeking somebody else or for the sake of a grievance proposal (Lord, 2017:12).

Pilgrimages were undertaken by clerics as a penance for murder committed incest, bestiality, and profanity. These pilgrimages were undertaken after the crime was committed. In medieval Christian pilgrimages, the genuine repentance of sins, the demonstration of faith, or the promise of healing superseded the urge to learn by visiting new places (Timothy and Olsen, 2006). The sins of monks and those of the high clergy were visited more often in the case of penitential pilgrimages than any other class. In the Irish penitentiary, a distinction was made between public and private penance. Pilgrimage was imposed for public sins with overtones of scandal and sexual offences of the clergy. The punishment for scandalous sins was a pilgrimage in the nude or on foot. For notorious crimes, the penitential pilgrimage remained in use through the late Middle Ages (Stopford, 1999:138).

The three great pilgrimage centres of the eleventh to fifteenth centuries were Jerusalem, where the objects of worship included the empty tomb of Christ; Rome, where St. Peter and St. Paul were buried, and Santiago de Compostela, where the tomb of St. James became a major shrine after its supposed discovery in the ninth century. Pilgrimage continued to flourish in the face of pestilence (such as, notably, the Black Death) and strife (such as the Hundred Years' War), finally decreasing in the light of the British Reformation and European religious wars. The Church provided spiritual protection to those pilgrims who died on their devotional trips. In 1095, the first such plenary indulgence was granted to pilgrims walking or travelling to the

Holy Land. This was a significant assurance considering the vast number of pilgrims who were victims of illness (Bell and Dale, 2011:602-604).

Jonathan Riley-Smith describes the crusade as one of the forms of the “papally” approved Christian Religious War and, by its very essence; this holy war was seen as a sacramental pilgrimage towards both the foreign and internal enemies of Christianity. For the movement to qualify as a crusade, three conditions had to be met. First, it had to be a sacred, religiously inspired war fought in the name of Christ and against his enemies. Beyond that, it had to be a sacramental pilgrimage followed by the taking of the vow and (generally) the taking of the cross, thereby giving the advantages of redemption to the crusaders. Third, it had to be endorsed by the Pope. The integration of these three elements into a whole can be seen as one of the factors behind the success and popularity of the crusades (Riley-Smith, 2008).

Birch (2000:89-90) discusses the history of medieval pilgrimage, pointing out that the debates around medieval pilgrimages delivered many narratives around pilgrimage. Rome established itself as an important and popular centre of Christian pilgrimage long before the twelfth century. Many Roman Catholics visited churches with distinct architecture in the twelfth century. They were provided with access to the tombs of the city’s saints and martyrs that had been installed many centuries before. Rome was developing as a popular centre of pilgrimage and churches were built on a large scale to accommodate the growing numbers of pilgrims. Another major pilgrimage centre that grew in the twelfth century is the island of Santiago in Compostela. The Bishop of Ilia, Theodimir, discovered the body of a man in the north-western corner of Spain in the first half of the ninth century. King Alfonso II (791-842) had a church built on the site where the body was found. Alfonso III (866-910) took it upon himself to promote the church (Birch, 2000:175).

Christianity spread through the successor states of northern Europe. Pilgrims began travelling to Rome in numbers. This flow of pilgrims was fuelled by the rapidity of the Muslim advance through the near east in the seventh century, which made pilgrimage to the Holy Land increasingly difficult (Birch, 2000:38). The desire for pilgrims to participate in religious pilgrimages grew stronger. Pilgrimages form part of the religious identity of believers of different religions. The subsequent section will therefore describe the purpose of pilgrimage and pilgrimage walking amongst Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus.

2.2.2 Muslim pilgrimage (*Hajj*)

Bharati (1963: 136) suggests that Hindus and all other religious groups in India consider the Mecca pilgrimage to be very important, but not essential. The Muslim can be viewed to be an exception to this. Some religious people in India see the completion of their spiritual obligations after completing the Mecca pilgrimage. While the historical origins of *Hajj* are challenged, most Muslims believe that God revealed the *Hajj* and its connected practices to Abraham. Later generations, however, corrupted the practice by adding idolatry and other falsehoods to the *Hajj*, until Mohammed purified and re-established the rituals as they were revealed from God in their pure Abrahamic form (Long 1979; Robinson 1999). The *Hajj* is mentioned several times in the Quran. For instance, in Quran 22: 27–30, God tells Mohammed to publicise the *Hajj* to the people:

Announce to the people the pilgrimage. They will come to you on foot and on every lean camel, coming from every deep and distant highway that they may witness the benefits and recollect the name of God in the well-known days (*ayyam ma'lumat*) over the sacrificial animals He has provided for them. Eat thereof and feed the poor in want. Then let them complete their rituals and perform their vows and circumambulate the Ancient House Whoever honors the sacred rites of God, for him it is good in the sight of his Lord (see Peters 1994: 7).

Another popular Surah (verse) proclaiming the *Hajj* is found in Quran 3: 90–91:

The first House of Worship founded for mankind was in Bakka (Makkah). Blessed and guidance to mankind. In it are evident signs, even the Standing Place of Abraham . . . and whoever enters it is safe. And the pilgrimage to the temple [*Hajj*] is an obligation due to God from those who are able to journey there.” (see Long 1979: 3).

Aziz describes the Mecca pilgrimage as the most important pilgrimage event for Muslims. All Muslims need to perform this Mecca pilgrimage at least once in their lifetime. This honour must be achieved as much as he or she is physically and financially able to travel to Mecca. In many predominantly Muslim countries, national governments and some international organisations (such as the United Nations, UN) have programmes that assist citizens to make the pilgrimage by providing loans, grants, and other forms of support (2001:156).

Timothy and Olsen (2006:193) state that, in the city of Mecca a large mosque, *al-masjid al-haram*, or the sanctuary, dominates the landscape and is the centre of the annual pilgrimage. The mosque has been expanded on several occasions to accommodate the growth of pilgrim

numbers. To accommodate the growth in numbers, the two hills Safa and Marwa have been included in the rituals, which play a critical role in the pilgrimage rituals. The Hajj commences on the seventh day of the twelfth month (*Zul-Hijja*) of the *Hijjah*. The number of travellers to the Holy land has risen significantly over the past five years. Recent statistics from 2003 and 2004 indicate that more than two million Muslims travelled from all around the globe (including Saudi Arabia) throughout the year to engage in the ceremonies of the *Hajj* (Government of Saudi Arabia, 2005).

2.2.3 Buddhist pilgrimage

In 249 B.C., the mighty Mauryan ruler Asoka, who had conquered and ruled almost all of India between 273 and 236 B.C. visited Lumbini as part of his pilgrimage to the holy Buddhist sites and personally worshipped the sacred place where the Buddha was born. To remember his visit, he erected a stone pillar with an illustration in Brahmi's code to document the occurrence for future reference (San, 2001:69). There seems to be some evidence that, after the death of the Buddha, followers and sympathisers who had practised the *dhamma* (the actions and teachings of the Buddha) paid a visit to the place where the remains were kept. Some of Buddha's close friends paid visits to sites at which the Guru's remnants also were kept. The need to keep the Buddha's remains was unexplainable (Bharati, 1963:152). Gautama Buddha shared this mistrust of pilgrimages. He advised his followers not to go on pilgrimages, describing them as meaningless rituals. "Unless the waters of the Ganges could actually help remove sin, then all the fish will go straight to heaven." Yet, ironically, among his last words one finds the instruction: "Walk on!" (Roos, 2006:15). Roos (2006:41) suggests that, unlike the sacred sites of Hinduism, which are often associated with myth, the stations of Buddhist pilgrimage in India follow the footsteps of an actual historical figure, Siddhartha Gautama (563-483B.C.). Guatama was the son of an aristocratic Hindu chief, sometimes referred to as a king. He was protected from the "cruel world" as a child, but an encounter with the harsh realities of life outside his compound "enlightened" him. The gods are efficacious because they have gained the One. Heaven is clear because they have gained the One. The earth is at rest because they have gained the One. The One appears to represent the Tao, the universal principle that causes everything to become what it is. . Enlightenment within this context refers to the thoughts of Chinese Buddhists (Mather, 1987:35). He abandoned his family and the approved heir of the palace and walked out into the world in search of truth.

Obeyesekere (1966) describes the Buddhist pilgrimage in Sri Lanka as an undertaking that moves pilgrims from the localised system of the community and the area to the central pillar of the pilgrimage centre. The “localised version” focuses on particular spirits, their characteristics, mythology, and the activities connected to them, and this differs from village to village. Such structures for each community or area establish the boundaries of the group of devotees and validate their social structures. Deities have jurisdiction and control over the devotees’ culture (Obeyesekere, 1966: 16).

Often, tombs are located in regions that lack adequate facilities. Monks play an important role in these towards enhancing the health care and education of the local community. Again, they are functioning tombs deserving of devotion and observance. Thousands of pilgrims come every year from all over the globe to pay tribute to the Greatest Teacher (*Sattha*). The Buddha is a well-known international phenomenon and receives merit through this pilgrimage of devotion and spirituality (San, 2001:46).

The Pubbarama, located east of the city and donated by Lady Visakha, the Buddha’s principal benefactor, was an important monastery in Sravasti. At Sravasti, there existed a community of nuns as well as a community of monks during the Buddha’s time. Sravasti became a significant holy place because the Buddha accomplished the grandest wonder of all, the Twin Miracle, through dispelling the non-believers. As a holy or sacred place is one of the characteristics of a pilgrimage, the journey to the Sravasti became a pilgrimage. In a sequence of extraordinary occurrences, the Buddha produced several manifestations of himself sitting and standing on the lotuses, allowing flames and water to emerge from his body. This wonderful occurrence, named the Miracle of Sravasti, is the favourite activity of Buddhist compositions (San, 2001:104-105).

The pilgrimage to enlightenment is central to Theravada Buddhism. The three jewels (Buddha, dharma, and sangha), as well as ideas like impermanence, non-self, karma, reincarnation, and dependent origination. These ideas also include ethical principles, peaceful sitting, and enlightenment and guided meditation (Tricycle, Buddhism for beginners, n.d.). Furthermore, Theravada’s Buddhist pilgrimage does not bring about any systematic change in the social status of pilgrims who return to their home communities, in contrast with the experience of the Thai Muslims who are on their way to Mecca. Returning from this long and costly journey, the Thai Muslim pilgrim receives the title of *haji* (one who has successfully completed the *Haji*) and receives respect and social confidence. In this respect, the Muslim pilgrimage is closer to

the contextual essence of the rite of passage. The Theravada Buddhist pilgrimage, in contrast, has become a common commitment that helps bring about an internal change in the merits of the pilgrim rather than any permanent change in the status of his outside interpersonal interactions (Pruess, 1976).

2.2.4 Indian pilgrimage (Hindu)

Pilgrimage is considered to be an important practice in the Hindu tradition (Bharati, 1963:85). Bhardwaj (1985:241) claims that Hindu pilgrimage is a spatial activity. The concept of pilgrimage forms an alliance with the concept “circulation or movement”. Spatial behaviour relates to the ideas and beliefs, which the pilgrim retains about the pilgrimage. Pilgrimage to India seems to be the outcome of the ancient pagan justification of common belief, illustrated in the enlightened beings of Hinduism within the context of local improvements in Islam. The morality of a pilgrimage occurs primarily from the attachment to the location itself and not so much from the spirituality whose sanctuary it is. Whether it is about the area or not from a spiritual standpoint, the journey’s objective will be inspired (Bharati, 1963:136).

Religious belief is at the core Sravasti was a *Pubbaram* of the wants and needs as well as oaths and behaviours characterising the Hindu pilgrimage, which refers to pilgrimage of enlightenment. Pilgrimage is a process in which people seek to discover the natural world around them. The number of Hindu holy places in India is huge and the custom of pilgrimage widespread. In fact, the whole of India can be seen as a gigantic holy space arranged into a framework of pilgrimage centres and their hinterlands (Bhardwaj 1973: 7). Travel for the intent of pilgrimage is a significant part of Hindu religion. Millions of worshippers travel across India and overseas every year to engage in great festivals, pilgrimage journeys, and ritual purifications (Kaur 1982, 1985; Singh 2003).

For Singh (2006:221), the Hindu pilgrimage (*Tirtha-yatra*) is an act and process of the sacred crosswalk. This forms part of sacred transformation. Pilgrimage is a spiritual journey and a driving power that unifies divinity and humanity. It is a quest for completeness. The act of pilgrimage, including the walk, activities, and experiences of companionship, is itself a custom of transformative meaning, a reinvention of the concept of the “encounter.” The Hindu term *tirtha-yatra* itself denotes this quality. According to Hindu beliefs, by undertaking a pilgrimage an individual is transformed and begins life anew. Pilgrimage serves as a change agent. Of all the religious practices associated with Hinduism, pilgrimage is believed to be the most important and meritorious rite of passage. Hindu pilgrimage involves three stages: initiation

(from the time one decides to take the journey to the beginning of the journey), finality (the journey itself and the associated impressions), and re-aggregation (thanksgiving) (Singh, 2006:222).

The human quest to find peace and experience sacred space drives faith-building and the desire to travel (Singh 2005). Feelings associated with positive pilgrimage experiences and faith-building lead pilgrims to return to their normal life and share experiences with other members of society. Pilgrimage is a way to heal the body and soul by walking and opening the soul to the spirit inherent in Mother Earth (Singh, 2006:223). Like all other religious groups in India, pilgrimage is held to be highly commendable but not necessary for spiritual well-being (Bharati, 1963:136).

Extant relevant literature shows similarities and differences between the origins of pilgrimage, *Hajj* and Buddhist and Hindu pilgrimages. Pilgrimage journeys are an important component of the Hajj, Buddhist, and Hindu religion and faiths. These religions are defined by their pilgrimage journey on foot. In all three religions, pilgrimage is synonymous with faith. They share the same purpose when entering and pursuing this journey. It centres on praying, penance, walking to sacred places, and re-establishing their faith and beliefs. The focus subsequently turns to a clarification of relevant concepts and definitions as informed by extant literature, with special reference to scholarly debates centred on these.

2.3 Concepts and definitions

2.3.1 What is pilgrimage?

Pilgrimage is acknowledged as among the social and spiritual practices commonly known to human society. It is an essential feature of the religions of the world, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity (Barber, 1993:1). Scholars have sporadically described a pilgrimage as a voyage of religious causes, generally to a holy place, explicitly for purification rituals and spiritual comprehension (Basu, 2004; Morinis, 1992; Dubisch, 1995).

The destination of the pilgrimage walk is not an end in itself. Messenger avers that pilgrimage has always been about the journey itself (2017:1). Pilgrimage is a journey to a destination (Johnson, Swartz, and Tisdell, 2010:212). According to Staddord (1997), the nature of the destination is a crucial component of the pilgrim's journey. Each pilgrimage is assigned a specific goal, a final radiant destination, such as visiting a sanctuary (Gros, 2014:110). Pilgrimage is a process of mystery, a method of dispelling perceptions in general and

perceptions regarding oneself. The pilgrimage route includes converging, which includes the direct ways that pilgrims take from their homes (Staddord, 1997). Pilgrimage becomes an act of celebration and remembrance. Many people are unable to travel to international destinations to experience different sacred locations. People who are unable to travel to international sites have substitute pilgrim locations. These locations were created to fill the void. The original replications were replaced by man-made architectural formations. More people were allowed to participate in some type of pilgrimage due to such man-made sites. Many more people benefitted from the man-made formation (Messenger, 2017:2).

It is a challenge to venture on a pilgrimage and discover a unique way of looking at things. A pilgrimage creates an atmosphere whereby the pilgrim is allowed to be still and peaceful. The pilgrimage offers an action-filled moment of everyday life, which is an opportunity to challenge one's personal sense of self in peace. A pilgrimage encompasses the world and life itself (Watson, 2006:289). The freedom to experience walking as a complacent tool creates a platform for achieving the challenge of discerning which path to follow that is best for oneself. Power examines the idea of pilgrimage through the concept of rural walking. It includes attributes such as traditional pilgrimage, sharing experiences and knowledge, and sharing food along the way. Walking is perceived as a tool for relaxation to enhance one's time with God. The perception is that the tool is a means of enjoying life in a way that does not damage the earth. The idea is to live a simple life, and the walks enhance simplicity.

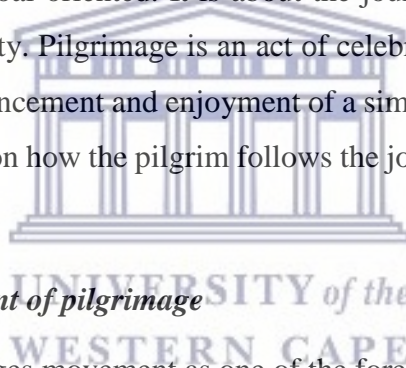
In order to detect geological links between pilgrimages and environmental attributes affecting pilgrims, changes in attributes between pilgrimages and the environment must be documented and measured. It is necessary to consider and compare a few qualities of pilgrimages, such as distance travelled and the number of pilgrims involved. Most qualities of pilgrimages cannot be differentiated by applying numbers. The differentiation in quality entails contextual diversity. Pilgrimage is a broad term that encompasses a wide range of human activities. Lack of consensus not only makes differentiating pilgrimages from non-pilgrimages more difficult, but it also leads to different classification standards (Staddord, 1997:42). Lack of agreement on that which amounts to a pilgrimage as opposed to that which does not poses the requirement of different criteria for classification. Pilgrimage, then, can be divided into three different categories:

1. An act of non-secular devotion and a journey to a sacred place;

2. Travelling to a holy place, attracting people or crowds with a view to a specific goal to be obtained regarding some religious or material benefit;
3. Includes long periods of travelling for growth in religion, as well as the literal journey (Sykes, 1982; Perry, 1970; Turner, 1973).

It is safe to comment that the definition of pilgrimage is very diverse. Gros also defines pilgrimage as a tool for intervention with a view to re-establishing faith. Pilgrims use pilgrimage as a gesture to give thanks to God for favour, blessings, and good health (Gros, 2014). Even though the practice of pilgrimage is experienced in different ways, it is sacred to the pilgrim. The pilgrim finds transition, growth, knowledge of the sacred, and a new sense of community. Some transitional factors that the pilgrim encounters re-establish the pilgrim's ordinariness, which the pilgrim's trip provides (Crim, 1981).

It is clear that some scholars discovered clear definitions of pilgrimage and some scholars not. There is consensus among many scholars and authors of that, which amounts to pilgrimage and what it entails. Pilgrimage is goal-oriented. It is about the journey. The journey is about the destination, exploring spirituality. Pilgrimage is an act of celebration and tribute to life. It is a process that reinforces the enhancement and enjoyment of a simple life. It is therefore not only centred on the destination, but on how the pilgrim follows the journey by means of a particular journey.



2.3.2 Movement as an element of pilgrimage

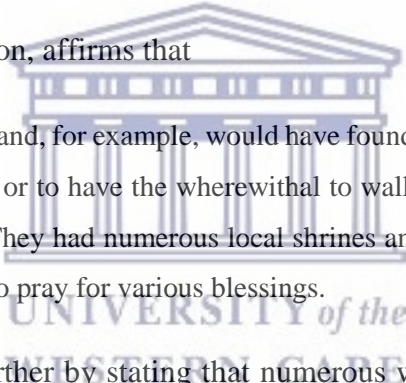
Stoddard (1997:43) acknowledges movement as one of the foremost fundamental components within the definition of pilgrimage. Pilgrimages must entail people physically moving from one location to another. A pilgrimage is a walk to a local sanctuary. The movement requirement is met by any journey that fits the criteria for pursuing a pilgrimage. A pilgrimage can take any form or shape as long as it fits the pilgrimage's criteria.

A pilgrimage may also be undertaken as penance for very serious violations. Pilgrimage on foot made it suitable for mild punishment (Gros, 2014). The description by Gros about pilgrimage connects to the three categories of pilgrimage (cf. Sykes, 1982; Perry, 1970; Turner, 1973). At least, pilgrimages should involve the active movement of people from one location to another for geographical functions. The first definitional issue is the minimum distance travelled away from one's immediate surroundings. However, the first definitional issue considers the minimum distance needed to be referred to as a pilgrimage. This aspect relates to

the third category mentioned above, which suggests that walking to the nearby shrine is also a form of pilgrimage. The construct of standard pilgrimage refers to a journey that is longer than local travel. In addition, Turner and Turner insist that a pilgrim's journey requires moving away from the "nearby" area (Turner and Turner, 1978).

Contemporary pilgrimage is all about distance and movement. Neame (1968) alludes to the residents of Lourdes who attended the local parish and had nothing to do with the Marian sanctuary. Whenever a citizen of Lourdes visited the sanctuary, which is sacred and related to one of the requirements of a pilgrimage, the distance of the trip became questionable. In the sense as to whether a short trip like this should be regarded as an actual pilgrimage. When a local of Lourdes visits the sanctuary, it is not considered a typical pilgrimage because the movement is measured in terms of distance. Stoddard (1997) defines the distance in terms of movement as a journey within an area of approximately fifteen square kilometres. The word "pilgrimage" usually calls up images of travellers undertaking long strenuous journeys to religious shrines around the world (Digance, 2006).

Reader (2015:8), in his discussion, affirms that



most people in medieval England, for example, would have found it difficult to get away from their homes for any length of time or to have the wherewithal to walk to prominent distant pilgrimage shrines such as Canterbury. They had numerous local shrines and holy wells to which they could make short visits to in order to pray for various blessings.

Reader (2015:66) elaborates further by stating that numerous ways of doing pilgrimages are widely available and not just on long-distance routes such as Shikolu and Santiago, but also on shorter and local ones. An extended "parade" comprised of a group of people moving on a path for spiritual growth can be recognised, under bound circumstances, as a short "pilgrimage." Sumption (2003) refers to bound circumstances as the fulfilment of a duty of the pilgrim. A pilgrim is bound by the vow of another: this involves a promise of accomplishment. The objectives of definitional standardisation will best be achieved by not quantitatively expressing a pilgrimage's "minimum distance." This is often already shown by the discussions on long circumambulation. One of the characteristics of a pilgrimage is measured by the distance walked. Instead of stating, as an example, that the minimum distance should exceed thirty kilometres, the term "pilgrimage" is outlined here as a movement that is "longer than local" (Neame, 1968).

There is a sense of expectation between the pilgrim, pilgrimage walking, and the movement of pilgrimage. The pilgrimage dictates the type of journey that the pilgrim will experience. The acknowledgement of the completion of the required distance, the prescribed route, and the purpose of the journey defines the nature of the movement. The nature of the movement in other words explains the motivation and reason for the pilgrimage. For example, religious, spiritual, giving, or repentance could be the motivation behind the pilgrimage movement.

2.3.3 The motivation behind pilgrimage

Motivation is a component of the definition of pilgrimage. It assesses the motive behind the movement. The motive, which is the dependable variable, relates to the definition of pilgrimage and is typically spiritual. There is therefore a general agreement as to the authentication of a pilgrimage journey: it should be spiritual in nature (Stoddard, 1997:46). For many pilgrims, the journey is either spiritual or religious, or combines both of these. However, whether it is spiritual or religious, such agreement easily dissolves once an attempt is made to define the term “religious.” In order to understand the terms “spiritual” or “religious” when it comes to the motivation for the pilgrimage, the relevant extant literature needs to be explored. Neither the observers nor the travellers themselves can distinguish mainly religious motivations from a variety of alternate explanations for the quest of pilgrimage.

Nolan and Nolan (1989) discuss pilgrimage in terms of the reason behind the journey addressing the issue of whether the journey becomes a personal pilgrimage if an individual decides to go to a pilgrim’s journey site. They ask whether the experience is caused by curiosity. The fact that journeys are created for multiple reasons thus ends up in another definitional drawback. If an individual travels as a tourist to a remote location, which also includes visiting a sacred site in the vicinity, does that make the individual a pilgrim? The question is demonstrated by the confusion as to whether or not a massive group of participants should be counted as pilgrims on business tours to religious sites (Nolan and Nolan, 1989).

Dubisch (2004) explains that a pilgrimage is a path that many of its attendees believe to be such (Coleman and Eade, 2004:21) and that the use of the term “pilgrimage” to allude to a wide variety of tourisms has contributed to a wide range of assumptions about its nature. It seems logical to conclude that that which counts as a pilgrimage has now been expanded to include a voyage that can “be either religious or secular” (Smith, 2001:66). The operational resolution to this dilemma as to that which counts as a pilgrimage involves a return to a pilgrimage site even if it is likely that not all people who make the journey does so primarily for religious reasons.

The problem has been well demonstrated by the confusion as to whether or not a significant number of participants can be counted as pilgrims on commercial tours of religious sites (Nolan and Nolan 1989). For many, the pilgrimage journey is not solely made for spiritual reasons. The nature of the destination is a crucial component within the definition of that which amounts to a pilgrim's journey (Stoddard, 1997:45-46).

It is evident that the motivation or reason for a pilgrimage is personal and centres on perception. In medieval times, a pilgrimage was walked for religious and spiritual reasons. Even though many pilgrims continue to walk pilgrimages for religious and spiritual reasons, it has somehow been commercialised. The motive or reason for it has changed and evolved into something very different for many. One of the reasons for a pilgrimage nonetheless remains walking to a sacred or sanctified place.

2.3.4 *Concept of sanctified places*

A sacred place is merely not linked to any random space. It is a distinct space that enjoys spiritual sanctification of one kind or another. Scholars have determined the classification or specification of sacred sites. However, it is known that larger populations have identified sacred places within their jurisdiction. Scholars who engage in the discussion of pilgrimage walking have experienced a pilgrim's journey themselves (Stoddard 1997). Eliade defines a sacred site in terms of space, time, and cosmology (1987). The ideology of a sacred space/ site lies at the heart of the sociologist's differentiation between the religious and the secular (Hamilton and Spicer, 2016). Eliade defines a sacred place as one where the three cosmic levels, which include earth, heaven, and the underworld, are connected with one another. At the same time, Eliade acknowledges that, from a religious person's viewpoint regarding the entire world, the ideology of sacredness stems from "the work of the gods" (1987). Inoue divides sacred spaces for religious journeys into three groups: intrinsic sanctuary ground, external sanctuary ground, and digital sanctuary ground. In this identification, a sacred space relates to either a physical place or the "sanctification or sacralisation of inner space" (2000: 25).

Establishing a sacred space or place is important. It is normally measured or assessed by worshippers. If worshippers walk to random places and the destination is not a tangible site, it is said they are wandering persons and not pilgrims. Where pilgrims are typically interested in extremely revered travelling monks' temporary residences (Bhardwaj, 1973; Eck, 1985), the designation of religious sites may be hindered, for instance in India. Such conditions do not pose a large concern, since they would be co-opted to sacred places under the broad concept of

pilgrimages, unless the actual ground around the renowned individual is considered sacred, no matter how brief the duration. Then the public appeal to the current location should be considered an occasion for a pilgrimage. In contrast, the spiritual journeys that the Trinidad spiritual Baptists' church refers to as "flexible pilgrimage" present greater definitional challenges (Glazier, 1983). Spiritual Baptists in Trinidad are mostly men and women of African heritage. Their church services are similar to Black Protestant Charismatic services in the United States, with a strong emphasis on the scriptures, preaching, singing, clapping, and dancing. This congregation participates in spiritual journeys that are often not identified with a conventional pilgrimage (Taylor, 1993:27).

Pilgrimages are organised as group activities that emphasise walking. Walking and the pilgrimage site have lost their religious significance. Nature, outdoor activities, and especially stillness, on the other hand, are essential sources of spiritual experiences. Along the route, different people experience holy locations differently. During the pilgrimage, the highly regarded silent walk creates a sacred space where spiritual and self-transformation experiences can occur (Davidsson Bremborg, 2013:544). There are two facets to the silent walk, one of socialism and one of materialism. They are both essential to the understanding of Swedish pilgrimages. Regulated silence provides a person's safe haven. Besides this, a peaceful space of solitude could become a place of spirituality. In particular, pilgrims record religious growth throughout periods of silence (Palmer, 2008). To become quiet, walks have an essential purpose for the pilgrims. By walking in silence, one can create a sacred space. The sanctuary of silence is a replacement for the pilgrim's point in extension, which is a holy place and space. The nature of a peaceful walk is that of moving in a safe, collaborative space for humans. Quietness provides a divine atmosphere, which encourages spiritual and metaphysical thoughts and feelings. The spirituality of the pilgrims is individualised and linked to self-transformation. Stillness may provide a holy place for the believer (Davidsson Bremborg, 2013:556-557).

Extant literature shows that a sacred or sanctified place is determined by the religious order of a community. The assessment is related to a specific space, person, religion, and spiritual environment. A sacred place is one of the requirements for a pilgrimage journey, and is attached to the objective or meaning of the pilgrimage.

2.3.5 Intention of the pilgrimage

The intention of the pilgrimage is motivated by the purpose of the pilgrimage journey. Staddord (1997:46-47) discusses the reason for the type of pilgrimage journey as a movement linked to

a destination which is referred to as sacred. However, the outcome of such a pilgrimage journey contributes to the ability to live a quality life. Scientific description of sites that are holy is complex. There is also a sharp conceptual differentiation between “sacred” and “unconsecrated” or “profane” places.

Researchers face the task of deciding whether the motive for going on a pilgrimage is worthy or not. The decisive factor is whether the site is worth the embrace of a family grave, a tree containing a social group community’s spirits, or, in the case of inner-city pilgrimage, a shrine. The mission becomes the driving force behind the pilgrimage. Another methodology is predicated on empirical knowledge concerning the number of pilgrims or the distance covered. When counting information is used, it is believed that a significant group of individuals moving to the chosen site signifies a high degree of holiness. Comparing the entire range of pilgrims to sacredness here is somewhat unsuitable when it comes to defining pilgrimage. Instead, it requires sporadic thinking: specifically, that “pilgrimages” include journeys to sites known as “sacred.” Pilgrimage walking is about perception: in this instance, the perception and opinions of groups are analysed and interpreted. Based on the collective responses of the recorded group (Bhardwaj 1973; Stoddard 1980; Jackson and Henrie 1983), where the group consists of the wider public, the sanctity of locations is defined organisationally in order to determine the reason for the pilgrimage.

The route of the pilgrimage defines the motive or reason for it. Pilgrimage is an intrinsic/extrinsic path to peace and simplicity and to solitude and slowing down. It really is the gateway to the hidden layers and complexities of well-being and conducting oneself (Rudolph, 2004). Gros (2014:114) acknowledges that the first main routes for Christians led to Rome or Jerusalem. From the third century onwards, Jerusalem became the ultimate pilgrimage for Christians. It was an immersion in the presence of Christ: walking the very soil on which he had walked.

There is a distinct link in the discussion above between the definition of pilgrimage, the reason behind a pilgrimage, the movement as an element of pilgrimage, sacred places, and the intent of a pilgrimage. It is clear that movement, motivation, sanctified places, and intent defines the journey and the purpose of the pilgrimage. All these elements are crucial when the pilgrim associates him- or herself with pilgrimage.

2.4 Definition of walking

Various scholars present different definitions of walking. Solnit (2001), in a discussion about walking, finds the ideology of walking and thinking to be embedded in a relationship of mutual understanding. She avers that the two variables are fine companions. She alludes to walking as a slow means of moving on foot, allowing one to think. Walking, therefore, is therapeutic; it is a process of cleansing and healing. Terrien (2003:261), whose work resonates with this understanding, similarly refers to the theme of walking not only as a connection that leads to the experience of wisdom but also to one that connects with the idea of walking as a way of life.

Watson (2006:290) sees walking as taking inventory of one's life: the simple act of stopping to pace oneself, pause, and reflect. Amartya Sen (1999), in turn, refers to it as an assessment of the quality of your life. Frederic Gros assesses walking as follows:

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).

One's experience of time is fractious in the sense that you are in continuous motion, transitioning as if underwater, captivated and dreamlike. Thoughts are passing you by, and you are passing thoughts by. Walking is defined as putting one foot before the other, walking one-step at a time. At times, one feels over the moon, listening attentively to the footsteps and movements that one creates from a long walk, as if one were outdoors, or within space and time (Watson, 2006:289). Slipping through and around, winding and moulding routes, and avoiding falling are all possibilities when exploring urban walking (Sinclair, 1997). According to Bassett, (2004:408), walking is an exercise that allows learners to expand their eyes and ears to what is frequently taken for granted or overlooked in urban negotiations of space. It is a way of increasing awareness of urban places and rhythms. Walking creates time and rhythm, and you are in touch with your senses of the self and inner self. Walking is a spiritual tool: it resolves challenges and gives answers to many questions. It is a cleansing process, which presents aspirations and motivation to the walker (Lucas, 2008). "Walking is not a sport. Sport is a matter of techniques and rules, scores and competition, necessitating lengthy training:

knowing the postures, learning the right movements. Then, a long time later, comes improvisation and talent” (Gros, 2014:1).

Gros defines walking as putting one foot in front of the other. He refers to walking as a way of having fun, playing. Walking, according to Gros, is not time bound; it is not competitive, but recognised as the best path for viewing the landscape. An indecisive freedom comes with walking, leaving one unburdened, forgetting all that is unconnected and insignificant behind. It is the freedom to choose to leave things behind and think about other things. By walking, you are not going to *meet* yourself, but *find* yourself. Walking creates an opportunity to escape from the impression of the self, the desire to be someone, to have a name and a history (Gros, 2014:2-6). Gros (2014:31-32) refers to walking as the ideology of being outdoors, outside in the fresh air. You experience a form of transformation within the parameter of the outdoors. There are elements that isolate an obstruction between here and there. In walks that range over a number of days, during important journeys, everything is rearranged and transformed.

In the spiritual values section of *Die Burger* (2019), the spirituality of walking is associated with many things (RRV). We find ourselves racing against time. Walking creates spiritual attributes and resembles resistance against the vicious pace of life. Walking is a process of experience and challenge. It is a soul and spiritual cleanser that makes space for new ideas and experiences. It is a problem solver, an answer to riddles, and a weight eliminator. Walking is a journey into the unknown, exploring endless possibilities and opportunities. It creates a sense of affiliation and belonging. Walking allows you to have endless conversations with God, telling him of your inner secrets and asking for guidance and advice. Koyama observes:

God walks slowly because He is love. If He were not love, He would have gone much faster. Love has its speed. It is an inner speed. It is a spiritual speed. It is related to a different kind of speed from the technological speed we are accustomed to. It is ‘slow’, yet it is Lord over all other speeds since it is the speed of love (1979:6).

Kagge describes walking as an activity that creates inner peace and sets a pace of patience and silence (2019:8). One therefore finds that walking with God includes challenges, desires, and praying for peace and serenity, acknowledging sins and asking for forgiveness and thanking him for his protection but also asking for protection. Walking has become a soul-searching activity. Walking has no boundaries or limitations. It is not age- or gender-specific. It possesses no race, class or ethnicity and is not limited to religion. It creates simplicity and humbleness. Lorimer (2011:25-26) defines walking as a cultural activity made meaningful by the physical

features and material textures of a place. Walking becomes a way to find a fit between self and world. It creates a platform for time out and solitude. It becomes you and it becomes rhetorical and philosophical. Walking is a crucial personal exercise and a way of communicating with the surroundings (Bassett, 2004: 398).

According to Conradson (2005), walking is the change agent of self-searching, where well-being is a crossover of many things to be experienced. It is the discovery of space within an equilibrium that is obtained, a newly founded state spinning out of matters of mind, body, and spirit. Walking is an effective means of self-help, a journey to improve mental health, and an acceptable way to get to know ourselves. The United Kingdom (UK) pedestrian policy describes it as a sustainable means of transportation that greatly benefits body and mind (Davies, 1999:7). Middleton (2010:575) defines walking as a socio-technical grouping. Socio-technical grouping can thus be viewed as part of “a system of perspectives that are strongly linked with social and geographical experiences” (McGrath, Reavey and Brown 2008: 58). This grouping according to Middleton allows specific attention to be devoted to sanctified, contextual, and technical associations. Middleton reiterates the importance of interacting with daily urban walking. Walkers dictate a culture of walking. The fundamental values range from walking for transportation or walking for recreational purposes. The essential values related to walking for transportation are safety, freedom, time, and accessibility.

The essential values associated with walking for recreation are experience, relaxation, well-being, memories, meditation, and exercise. Walking for recreation should be promoted through different worthy aspects such as experience, relaxation, exercise, and health (Brown and Shortell, 2014:54). Slavin finds walking to be a spiritual practice. The perception of walking and the walking journey are subjectively related. The walking body is a creative and reproductive institution (2003:2). Sean Slavin believes that the structural components of the walking, whether communal or spiritual, have an effect on the walking body (Slavin, 2003).

Literature therefore demonstrates that there are correlations and disparities when it comes to defining the notion of walking. Scholars on the topic express different views and opinions regarding their understanding of walking. A range of themes emanates from the discussions and cuts across issues related to connection, relationship, thoughts, time, rhythm, space, cleansing, spirit, healing, freedom, and life, as created by the ideology of walking. It is proven that walking influences one’s well-being.

2.5 Walking and well-being

Worldwide, cardiovascular disease (CVD), overweight, and depression are expected to rise, affecting both physical and mental well-being (WHO and the World Federation for Mental Health, 2012). Walking has been shown to be a cost-free and efficient form of physical activity that can deter CVD from occurring (WHO, 2012 and Boone-Heinonen, Evenson, Taber, Gordon-Larsen, 2009); address obesity (Morabia and Costanza, 2004; Pucher, Buehler, Bassett, Dannenberg, 2010); and reduce symptoms of depression (WFMH, 2012; Robertson, Robertson, Jepson, and Maxwell, 2012; Armstrong and Edwards, 2004).

The social and physical environment can determine whether a person is open to the concept of walking (Sallis, Owen, and Fisher, 2008). Human beings are more likely to walk in the companionship of someone else or a pet (Ball, Bauman, Leslie, and Owen, 2001), which is particularly relevant for women in weight management and physical appearance (Biddle and Mutrie, 2007:43). People are also more likely to walk in a physical environment that is visually beautiful and preserved (Sallis, *et al.* 2008; Lee and Maheswaran, 2011; McCormack, Rock, Toohey, and Hignell, 2010). Most physical environments are accessible (Lee and Maheswaran, 2011) and include contained footpaths (Owen, Humpel, Leslie, Bauman, and Sallis, 2004; Kaczynski and Henderson, 2007). These maintained and contained footpaths are perceived to be safe (McCormack, Rock, Toohey, and Hignell, 2010; Gatersleben and Andrews, 2013). There is a strong correlation between the natural world and physical exercise (Mytton, Townsend, Rutter, Foster and Green, 2012). Natural areas are much more likely to be used for physical activities than recreation centres or sports facilities (Kaczynski and Henderson, 2010).

Natural environments enhance well-being (Marselle, Irvine and Warber, 2013:5604). Walking in natural settings has been shown to offer positive effects for mental well-being in contrast with walking indoors (Bowler, Buyung-Ali, Knight, and Pullin, 2010; Thompson Coon, Boddy, Stein, Whear, Barton, and Depledge, 2011). Walking alone and in natural surroundings has been shown to improve psychological and emotional well-being by enhancing concentration (Hartig, Evans, Jamner, Davis, and Garling, 2003; Berman, Jonides, and Kaplan, 2008). Positive emotions (Hartig *et al.*, 2003; Baker *et al.*, 2008), reduces negative ones (Hartig *et al.*, 2003; Berman, Jonides, and Kaplan, 2008; Park, Furuya, Kasetani, Takayama, Kagawa, and Miyazaki, 2011) and stress (Hartig *et al.*, 2003) Compared to walking alone in urban areas, walking in groups in natural surroundings may have a greater impact on well-being. A group walk in the surrounding environment has been shown to substantially increase emotional

responses and self-esteem, equivalent to a group walking indoors (Peacock, Hine, and Pretty, 2007).

Up to the present, research on walking and well-being has focused on a small number of natural landscapes. The most popular forms of natural landscapes in walking research are parks and university campuses (Bowler, *et al*, 2010; Thompson Coon *et al*, 2011). Bowler *et al*. (2010) and Thompson Coon *et al*. (2011) found no walking research that investigated more than one form of natural landscape. The perceived naturalness or biodiversity of the physical environment has also been found to contribute to well-being (Jorgensen and Gobster, 2010; Fuller, Irvine, Devine-Wright, Warren, and Gaston, 2007; Dallimer, Irvine, Skinner, Davies, Rouquette, Maltby, Warren, Armsworth, and Gaston, 2012). Hinds and Sparks (2011) discovered that “more” natural environments (such as a mountain, forest, woods, or valley) were related to greater psychological well-being when compared to “less” natural environments (such as, parks, gardens, farmland fields).

Various scholars wrote and debated about walking and its effect on an individual’s well-being. The evidence at hand demonstrates the synergy between these two variables. Walking, such as pilgrimages, creates a congruency between the spirit and embodiment. You, as the individual, dictate the pace, space, rhythm, and time during a walk. The type of well-being you need dictates the type of walking that you will engage in, whether it be individually or collectively. Pilgrimage walking therefore clearly serves as a type of well-being.

2.6 Defining pilgrimage walking

Pilgrims only receive pilgrimage status by walking, cycling, or horse riding. Other modes, such as driving, do not qualify individuals as pilgrims. The cathedral authorities in Santiago, for instance, only accept people who are walking, cycling, or horse riding as pilgrims (Slavin, 2015:3). Denet makes a direct connection between pilgrimage and pilgrimage walking. He argues that walking is the greatest, if not the only, meaningful method to complete a pilgrimage. Walking is differentiated from other methods of travel, particularly the car or bus. Walking gives rise to a one-of-a-kind pilgrimage experience. The intensity of the pilgrimage is fundamental to its significance (Denet, 1997).

Traditional pilgrimage walking is associated with penance and endurance. Roos (2016:54) explains that pilgrimage should involve hardship, while this is not confined to Islam. There is still a strong tendency in Christianity to treat suffering as an authentic and even compulsory

part of the pilgrimage process. The hardship of the Camino is an example of such a pilgrimage. The long pilgrim's path to Santiago de Compostela in Spain emphasises the importance of walking the route rather than taking modern transportation. The hundreds of kilometres take their toll on the stamina of pilgrims, testing the walkers' patience and endurance abilities. Pilgrimage walking is a physical activity performed on foot and occurs within a rural environment that is outdoors and in nature. Exposure to this type of activity creates benefits to health and well-being (Maddrell, 2013:68). Pilgrims on foot consider cyclists to be non-pilgrims. The discussion by Slavin around cycling pilgrims confirms that meditating at 40 kilometres per hour is very challenging. While this involves a pointed social isolation on one hand, it confirms what many pilgrims see as the primary purpose for walking: to participate in a meditative ritual. Instead of focusing on the destination, one focuses on the journey and oneself (Slavin, 2015:4). This style of walking is referred by Thoreau as a "return to the senses" (2010).

Schneiders found that a group of people who walk together have mutual interests. The communality within this context of discussion is the shared interest in Christian beliefs and values. Mutual interests and a vital relationship exist between faith and spirituality. On the one side of the spectrum, you have theology and, on the other, spirituality (Schneiders, 1989:694). A relationship is formed between walkers sharing skills and knowledge whilst walking. This idea of sharing forms part of the spiritual bonding. However, the spirit of pilgrimage walking is to experience walking together and arriving at the end destination together. The difference between urban walking and traditional pilgrimage walking resides in the dynamics involved. In the case of urban walking, you can turn around at any time and deviate from the original walk as you see fit. In contrast, a pilgrimage has a start and end route. Pilgrimage walking could be costly, because it entails the need for meals, accommodation, and some formal planning. If you should deviate from your schedule, it can become a very expensive experience that could defeat its purpose (Power, 2015:51-52).

Pilgrimage is not always done "on foot" and can be achieved through other means of travelling. Traditional pilgrimage finds an attachment to walking. Walking gives you time and pace. It awakens the senses (Ingold & Vergunst, 2008; Omar *et al.*, 2012; Slavin, 2015). Aboriginal pilgrimage is similar to that of Islam, particularly as regards the Sufi Orders of *siyahal*, the motion or pace of walking, which is used as a method for abolishing worldly associations and granting oneself to be lost in God (Chatwin, 1987). Urban walking can be transformed into

acquisition of religious values, and every road can symbolise the “road of life.” A pilgrimage walk to the Centre of the World is to walk towards the naked truth (Eliade, 1959).

Pilgrimage walking implies that the usual conditions of daily life have been set aside. There is the potential for a different composition of soul-seeking, which more commonly occurs as a result of physical exertion, exhaustion, and hardships resulting from the sheer length of it all (Dennet, 1997). Pilgrimage walking is available to everyone, with no restrictions or requirements. The pilgrimage journey focuses on the “Way.” It is about the experience, the path, the walking of a unique route and finding the “self” (Cohen, 1979).

There are many perceptions attached to walking the Camino. The key assumption is that the Camino pilgrimage walk attaches itself to a spiritual concept. You walk the Camino to find yourself. The Camino calls your name and changes your life forever. It is a magical experience and offers solutions, comfort, and answers (Geldenhuys, 2019). The Kumano-kodo pilgrimage in Wakayama, Japan is a perfect destination and walking route for a pilgrimage. Because of its duration, availability, reliability, and promotion, the Kumano-kodo pilgrimage is validated by the iconic walking attraction. Pilgrims who visit Nakahechi and other pilgrimages such as Kumano-kodo do so for a number of reasons. Environmental classification, tranquillity, simplicity, orderliness, a feeling of spiritual or bodily well-being, and a desire to walk are some of these reasons (Kato and Prozano, 2017:243). The legitimacy of pilgrimage does not merely centre on the length of the journey, nor the religious or spiritual background of the pilgrim, but on how the journey is moulded for personal needs. In the (modern) walker’s view, cars and buses smear the essence of this route; they pollute a sacred space (Frey, 1998).

Pilgrimage presented the opportunity for a variety of viewpoints on pilgrimage. Various scholars have written on their perspectives on the qualities and philosophies of pilgrimage walking, as indicated in the above text. Between traditional pilgrimage and contemporary pilgrimage, various discoveries emerged. Traditional pilgrimage validates the journey as a walking activity. Whereas contemporary pilgrims see pilgrimage as an adaptable activity that may be tailored to the pilgrim’s unique needs. Contemporary pilgrimages, on the other hand, share some of the characteristics of traditional pilgrimages, with the emphasis on adjusting to the requirements of the pilgrims. Traditional pilgrims agree that the only way to attain spiritual bonding is to walk the pilgrimage journey. In South Africa, pilgrimage walking has taken on a variety of traditional and non-traditional manifestations.

2.7 Pilgrimage in South Africa

In Africa, pilgrimage in Africa takes on different forms and structures. The concept and experience of pilgrimage is perceived in various ways. Pilgrimage is a relatively new concept in Africa. Despite the fact that pilgrimage is associated with religious journeys, the current philosophy of pilgrimage in Africa is growing into an exploratory approach. The present section elucidates the perception of pilgrimage in Africa. However, only limited materials on pilgrimages in Africa and specifically South Africa are found within extant literature. Information on the Tankwa Camino, the Namaqua Camino, the Baviaans Camino and the Cape Camino are new and unique pilgrimages to be explored.

2.7.1 African perception of pilgrimage

The expansion of religion in Africa is manifested in pilgrimages and the creation of various ecclesiastical groups. This has been a common attribute of the Christian tradition. One's philosophical and cultural backgrounds influence popular religion. Pilgrimage is seen as one of the attributes of the "spirit of regime." These characteristics of the spirit regime can be observed through the lens of various church denominations (Brain and Denis, 1999:295-296). Many Marian shrines may be found in Southern Africa, which is part of Africa, where pilgrims flock every year. The purpose of this journey is to honor Mary for her divine maternity and her participation in humanity's salvation. Teaching pilgrims about Mary is one of the main functions of a Marian shrine. This, despite the fact that crime and political instability have contributed to a significant decline in the number of pilgrims attending Marian sanctuaries over the past 15 fifteen years. The decline in numbers has not affected the spirituality of the pilgrims (Brain and Denis, 1999:305).

Du Plooy (2016: iii) explains that South Africa has many pilgrimages and respected ways of travel. Respected types of travel allude to when and why people travel to a particular location. In the imagination of the public, South Africa has two major pilgrimages. The one is that of the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) to Moria and the second the one of the Nazareth Baptist Church (NBC) to Mount Nhlankakazi. Perfunctory internet searches produce photographs of hundreds of thousands of devotees making their way by bus and on foot to the respective pilgrimage destinations (Du Plooy, 2016:1). Some pilgrimages are formal and organised and attract people from everywhere, while others are informal and domestic where people travel short distances. The ZCC Easter pilgrimage to Moria near Polokwane (Müller 2011), the NBC sacred journey up the Nhlankakazi mountain in KwaZulu-Natal (Becken 1968), and the

Corinthian Church of South Africa's (CCSA) annual gathering at Mlazi (KwaZulu-Natal) (Wepener & Ter Haar 2014) serve as examples of organised religious pilgrimages in South Africa. However, no comprehensive anthropological research of these journeys has been performed. A study of the Mantsopa, Mautse, and Motouleng journeys, according to Du Plooy, would fill this gap in existing information. It is a multisite ethnographic study of pilgrimages to the sacred sites of the Eastern Free State province. The study describes pilgrimages to Mantsopa, Mautse, and Motouleng, and explains the reasons that pilgrims entertain for undertaking their journeys (Du Plooy, 2016: iii).

In addition, the few pilgrimages such as the Tankwa, Namaqua, Cape Camino, and the Abbot Francis Camino in South Africa are organised hiking/walking expeditions. De Klerk (2016:5) mentions that there are several organised pilgrimages in South Africa. The Tankwa-Camino is organised twice a year in the Karoo. Reformed congregations also organise their own pilgrimages. Prieska and Sedgefield Dutch Reformed Congregations are denominations that organise events such as pilgrimages. These local congregations visit each other's churches and each of these churches prepares prayer stations (Kerkbode, 2015).

Unlike the Caminos located in the rest of the world, in the cases of the Tankwa, Namaqua, Baviaans, and Cape Caminos, one needs to register and reserve a space by payment. Whereas Caminos and pilgrimages such as the Shikoku pilgrimage in Japan, the Camino de Santiago in Spain, the Portuguese Camino, and the Celtic Camino in Ireland, is open to anyone at any time. Unlike pilgrimages around the world, particularly the Spanish Camino, South African Caminos are exclusive by way of registration or reservation. Pilgrims who want to take part in the Spanish pilgrimage can literally start walking from anywhere, with no need to register or book accommodations ahead of time.

2.7.2 *The Tankwa Camino*

The Tankwa-Camino is a contemporary "Great Trek" that will take attendees through one of the country's most beautiful areas, the Tankwa Karoo. Strength of character and a healthy intellect, according to John Rohn, keep us on track, but the effective state of a person's awareness deserves to be nurtured in the same way that intelligence requires. It is vital to understand the ways in which one should feel, react, and let life in so that it can shape you (Rohn, 2013). The Tankwa Camino can shape the person's way of thinking and is considered to be a spiritual pilgrimage (Tankwa Camino, 2018).

The Tankwa desert will become your drug for 10 days as you walk through one of Africa's most incredible environments while hiking the Camino. A scene defies belief and reminds you that God is there in every detail. This is a place where time and space have been pushed to their limits. Your epic Tankwa Camino trek will take you through a variety of landscapes, a journey few people have ever experienced (Tankwa Camino, 2018).

2.7.3 The Namaqua Camino

The Namaqua Camino is a ten-day walk across the unique and varied Namaqualand landscape. It is a slack pack walk that requires you to bring your own camping gear, which is then transported to each overnight camp. The Namaqua Camino is a circular walk that begins in the quaint seaside village of Hondeklip Bay in South Africa's Northern Cape Province. This spectacular 260-kilometre path will take you across dry grasslands, a rare succulent landscape, and along the Namaqua National Park's unspoiled Atlantic coast. Only four walks per year are offered and only 25 participants are allowed per walk (The Namaqua Camino, 2020).

2.7.4 The Baviaans Camino

The Baviaans-Camino is a pilgrimage that stretches over 93 km and lasts four days on horseback or by foot. Everything needed for the four days must be brought into the region, necessitating the use of a support vehicle. With extremely poor mobile phone reception, connectivity in the Baviaans Wilderness is non-existent. Emergency communication or calls are managed via satellite phone. The Baviaans Camino's organisers transfer the participants' bags as well as firewood, water, food, tents, sleeping bags, and other supplies. All of these components are needed for this adventure to really "get away from it all" for a few days, but they contribute to the costs incurred by the pilgrim. The organisation needs a group size of 14, of which six can travel on horseback, in order to be as cost efficient as possible. A 50% deposit will guarantee your reservation, and the remaining deposit is due six weeks before your hike. The Baviaans Camino, like the other pilgrimages mentioned, is exclusively open to those who have registered and made a reservation (Baviaans-Camino, 2017).

2.7.5 The Cape Camino

Cape Camino consists of four sections and makes up a total distance of approximately 850 km. The four sections are Limietberg, Berg River and the Coastal and Peninsula Circular Sections. One's Camino can start at any of the four sections. The Peninsula Circular Section was developed first (in April 2015) and became a popular starting point. The distance to be covered

on each day is between 12 to 25 kilometres. The terrain is a combination of rural farmlands, gravel roads, beachscapes, winelands, mountain footpaths, wheat fields, Fynbos thickets, forests, and urban walking. The organisers of the Cape Camino firmly believe in supporting small/ medium, family-run, local establishments and the revenue generated goes directly to the communities, which creates employment and business sustainability. The Cape Camino has been designed to meet the needs of the individual. It centres on personal needs, motivations, and inspirations. The journey has a purpose and intention for you and you alone. The Cape Camino promotes slow travel and responsible tourism. The staff of Cape Camino has been facilitating the Cape Camino, over the last eight years voluntarily. Part of the package and journey is to incur ongoing expenses (Cape Camino, 2015).

South African pilgrimages include the Tankwa Camino, the Namaqua Camino, the Baviaans Camino, the Pilgrimage of Hope, and the Long Walk. The organisers of the South African pilgrimages mentioned are making an effort to conform to worldwide pilgrimage guidelines. Evidently, these organised Caminos are exclusive and limited to a few participants. In my opinion, spirituality, well-being, as well as pilgrimage should be ventures that are freely accessible to anyone interested in participating. If you look at concepts of a pilgrimage or a pilgrim, they all have religion or spirituality as a common denominator, and the location is typically a place of religious significance, such as Mecca, Santiago, Lourdes, Rome, Jerusalem, or the many locations for the Hindu and Buddhist faiths, and so on (Camino Forums, 2004). However, Caminos actually are the different routes that can be taken/ walked to achieve a pilgrimage. So, what are the new improvements within the international pilgrimage community?

2.7.6 Pilgrimage of Hope

A further unique pilgrimage is known as the Pilgrimage of Hope, an initiative of the organisation called *Communitas*, which, according to its website, “is a supportive network that guides faith leaders and communities to discover and live their calling.” The ministry’s office is located at Stellenbosch University’s Faculty of Theology. Its services include retreat planning, which is how the idea for a local pilgrimage started (*Communitas*, n.d.).

The first pilgrims who explored the route from Robertson to Cape Agulhas in October 2014 were staff members of *Communitas*. This route formed part of mapping out the Pilgrimage of Hope. It included participants who had previously walked the Camino in Spain. *Communitas*, since the very beginning of the Pilgrimage of Hope initiative, served the role of “confraternity”

to pilgrims and today offers general information to prospective ones. It also updates its guidebook and manages a Facebook page, while also keeping a record of pilgrims. Pilgrims need to register at Communitas in order to receive their official guidebook, a pilgrim passport, and a red hat. It also issues a certificate, similar to the Compostela on the Camino in Spain, at the end of the Pilgrimage of Hope at Cape Agulhas (Communitas, n.d.).

2.7.7 The Long Walk

The aim of the Long Walk Project, under the auspices of StreetBiz Foundation, is to establish contact with present and future entrepreneurs and raise awareness for the development of an entrepreneurial mindset, especially among the youth and the unemployed. In order to raise such awareness, Dr. Nico de Klerk, CEO of StreetBiz Foundation, walked across South Africa in just over four months. The journey started at the statue of Nelson Mandela at the Union Buildings on Mandela Day, 18 July 2018, and ended at the Cape Town City Hall in Cape Town on South Africa Day, 24 November 2018. During this journey of over 2 750 kilometres, De Klerk visited 104 communities where he would meet with schools, community leaders, and other interested parties. On his journey, he would talk to everyone else who crossed his path besides hosting workshops and presentations. StreetBiz is working with the contacts he made during the Long Walk Project as well as donor partners to create an online business school where entrepreneurs will be able to upskill and find valuable resources and training (StreetBiz, n.d.)

Once De Klerk had walked all the way to the centre of the Free State, Ms Lindiwe Sisulu, Minister of Small Business Development at that time, granted him permission to meet with the principals and learners of various schools. He shared with learners his insight about the kind of thinking needed to instil an entrepreneurial mindset. He encouraged learners to be in charge of their own lives. He believed that hosting workshops was part of the mental shift that had to occur in order for entrepreneurship to flourish (Kerkbode, 2018).

2.8 Contemporary international developments in pilgrimage

Reader (2007:211) confirms that major pilgrimage sites have developed at an unprecedented rate in recent years. Pilgrims have been flocking to sites associated with practically every religious practice, as well as those unaffiliated with any organised religious tradition, all over the world. Popular Catholic pilgrimage sites such as Lourdes in France, Medjugorje in Croatia, Fatima in Portugal, Santiago de Compostela in Spain, and San Giovanni Rotondo in Italy, for

example, have seen substantial increases in pilgrim numbers, particularly since the 1990s. Medjugorje is a perfect example of a pilgrimage that has grown in popularity in the last few years on a worldwide basis. It first gained popularity after a group of young people in the then-Bosnia-Herzegovina saw visions of the Virgin Mary in 1981. As political problems and the threat of war loomed over the city, it became a pilgrimage site. Medjugorje became synonymous with Catholic devotion, hopes for peaceful dispute settlement, and expressions of ethnic identity. As a result, the number of pilgrims increased steadily during the 1980s. In 1990, over a million people made the pilgrimage seeking salvation in the midst of an impending civil war. The volatile climate of the early 1990s, when the area was riddled with conflict, caused pilgrim numbers to plummet dramatically. However, now that the region has been routed, figures have started to increase again, and they now reach one million a year.

Many famous European Catholic pilgrimage sites, such as Santiago de Compostela in Spain's far west, are experiencing a similar surge in popularity. It was one of Europe's most important pilgrimages during the Middle Ages. It has seen a remarkable increase in pilgrim numbers after many decades of decline. Santiago's rapid surge in pilgrim numbers is notable, because it has little to do with the growing availability of modern travel, as an increasing number of pilgrims journey there on foot, horseback, or bicycle. The authority in Santiago awards a certificate, known as the Compostela, to those who moved at least 100 km on foot or by horseback, or 200 km by bicycle, to Santiago. The amount of credentials distributed has risen from 2 491 in 1986 to 74 614 in 2003 (Reader, 2007:211).

Catholic pilgrimage sites have received increasing attention in the United States (Swatos, 2002). In Japan, the Shikoku pilgrimage (Shikoku Henro), located on the island of Shikoku, a 1 400 kilometre-long walk, is also a popular pilgrimage route. The Shikoku pilgrimage covers visits to 88 Buddhist temples and has experienced growth in popularity. This has led to increasing visits by pilgrims. Growth occurred not only in the area of travelling pilgrims but also pilgrimage on foot. The travelling pilgrimages are made by car, bus, and so on. The number of journeys by car or bus has increased. The increase in growing totals in the 1980s and 1990s has been the result of organised bus pilgrimage tours. By the 1980s, travelling pilgrims overwhelmed the route. Due to various modern travelling pilgrims, the number of pilgrims on foot only tallied numbers in the hundreds (Reader, 2005).

Reader (2007:213) agrees that the international concept of pilgrimage has improved. Pilgrimages affiliated with existing religious practices, such as Catholicism and Buddhism,

have grown in popularity. There has also been the rise of modern and alternative forms of religious and spiritual culture. In conclusion, the evidence at hand demonstrates that there has been phenomenal growth in people taking part in pilgrimages globally. The reason for this is global connection, which makes it easier.

2.9 Pilgrimage as a means for international opportunity

The promotion of pilgrimage has increased possibilities and opportunities. Pilgrimages strengthen health and medical welfare, thereby increasing economic well-being. Pilgrimage is no longer exclusive, but rather available to a wider range of people. The ongoing development of mass transportation systems has made pilgrimage sites more accessible. Initially, Muslims from West Africa and Southeast Asia would have had to travel for months to reach the Saudi Arabian Peninsula. Their journey would have been stressful, with enough obstacles to keep the number of pilgrims to a minimum. Pilgrimages are now open to Muslims from all walks of life thanks to modern innovations (Reader, 2007:216).

As a result, the *Hajj* will teach valuable lessons about developing and sustaining cross-sectoral partnerships. Collaborations between agencies responsible for health, transportation, border control, and environmental health, for example, are now possible. The importance of the *Hajj* encounter to mass gathering planners in sharing best practices is obvious. However, lessons from mass meetings can be extended to other aspects of public health that involve cross-sector cooperation. The *Hajj* therefore offers an opportunity for study not only into all facets of mass gatherings, but also faith-based health promotion and capacity building for electronic disease surveillance.

Pilgrimage helps pilgrims co-create well-being of life as well as collaborate creatively with a power greater than ourselves (Warfield, Baker, and Foxx, 2014:873). Pilgrimage provides the opportunity to re-charge spiritual batteries. It is an opportunity to leave daily frustrations behind and focus on the self. It is an opportunity to spend time with loved ones and peers. Pilgrims use pilgrimage as a platform to make public statements, legitimising identity and confirming persistence (Bodane, 2008).

Furthermore, for the past 2 000 years, millions of Catholic believers have travelled the world on pilgrimages. Both the Muslim and Catholic pilgrims seem to accept the desire to momentarily abandon the conventional obligations or arrangement of their regular or weekly religious practice in order to accept something that is anti-structural (Warfield, Baker and Foxx,

2014:872). The latter affording them the opportunity for a family to travel together in search of an experience that is both sacred and collective. It unquestionably strengthens family ties and has therapeutic effects for its members. The pilgrimage allows for a variety of communication techniques as well as diverse interpretations of the aim of a pilgrimage by pilgrims, depending on their specific needs and expectations. Pilgrimage offers an opportunity for personal growth and the development of survival skills (Blackwell, 2007). Religious pilgrimage has always been regarded as a means of personal and shared restoration. Traditionally, shared restoration based on repentance leads to a new beginning born of redemption, such as the restoration of a physical or mental illness (Maddrell 2013:63). In certain respects, engaging in a religious pilgrimage allows the participant to focus on what they are doing and witnessing rather than the business (busyness) of getting there, being on time, and so on. The representatives who prepare the walks read the maps and direct the group, freeing the pilgrim of the need to focus on these details (2013:69).

Saayman *et al.* (2014:407-414) analysed the economic value of the ZCC Easter pilgrimage to Moria. They found that this pilgrimage boosted the regional economy by ZAR 400 million in 2011. As the single largest annual event in South Africa, in terms of both the number of attendees and its economic value. Other tourists in the province are affected by the ZCC conference. Other tourists are deterred from visiting the province over the weekend of the church convention in Moria as a result of the pilgrimage. During the Easter weekend, overcrowding, particularly at tollgates, discourages visitors to Limpopo Province. The ZCC pilgrimage is an opportunity for participants to nurture their spiritual well-being as well as provide economic value to the province. Oldstone-Moore (2009:118) agrees that pilgrimage offers a variety of opportunities, including the chance to meditate. Visitors to Robben Island, according to Fairer-Wessels (2005), do so because of the island's connection to global hero Nelson Mandela and his 27-year captivity. This in particular because they would be inspired to follow his example after having read his 1994 autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom*. In the latter case, these journeys are referred to as a literary pilgrimage.

According to Maddrell, the revival of the tradition of pilgrimage walks, which are largely organised by and for people, has offered people on the Isle of Man the opportunity to experience pilgrimage in their own surroundings. Pilgrimage has been made available to residents of the Isle of Man. Walking and engaging with nature, according to pilgrims, offers them a sense of embodied spiritual renewal. Whether it is because of the environment, fellow

pilgrims, or prayer and worship, many people find the journey as spiritual and meaningful. This experience by locals can also be offered to others (2013:75).

International connection creates more opportunities for participants to form part of the global pilgrimage community. The literature discussed confirms the relationship between contemporary developments and global opportunities within the pilgrimage community. The literature supports these possibilities and breakthroughs when fostering the idea of pilgrimages. When it comes to establishing the concept of pilgrimages, having a global perspective is valuable. There is a relationship between current world events and pilgrimage as a global opportunity for pilgrims. Literature reaffirms these opportunities and developments in order to increase the pilgrimage numbers or totals. There is a relationship between contemporary international developments and pilgrimage as an international opportunity for the global pilgrimage community.

2.10 Conclusion

Examining extant debates and discussions around pilgrimage therefore confirms that pilgrimage, walking, and pilgrimage walking are not unusual terms. There is a connection between the definitions, debates, and discussions in the literature around the ideology of pilgrimage, walking, and pilgrimage walking. The literature re-establishes pilgrimage as a meaningful journey and that it has not lost its purpose, whether it be traditional or modern pilgrimage.

The purpose of the chapter was to look at definitions, motivations, and perceptions around as well as the global stance on pilgrimage, walking, and pilgrimage. This has been achieved. There are similarities and differences between as well as noticeable trends and patterns related to the elements of the chapter. It is clear that there is a nexus between all the elements of pilgrimage in the chapter. The literature confirms that pilgrimage within the African context and specifically the South African environment is a relatively new concept. Perspectives on pilgrimage, contemporary international developments on pilgrimage, international opportunities for pilgrimage, and walking as an intervention for well-being was demonstrated.

This chapter introduced and discussed pilgrimage but also touched on the definition of walking as well as the relations between walking and well-being. The subsequent chapter will build on this by focusing on spirituality, well-being, and quality of life.

Chapter 3

Footprint of spirituality when it comes to well-being and quality of life

3.1 Introduction

Spirituality, well-being, and quality of life (QoL) are perceptual values. Every individual experiences the effect of spirituality as a means of well-being differently. Well-being significantly contributes to their QoL. This chapter will examine extant scholarly literature on concepts and definitions of spirituality and well-being in order to assess the impact or impression of spirituality on well-being. The theoretical application will focus on Seligman's PERMA model, which entails five pillars of well-being. Elements of these pillars include positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishments. The PERMA model will demonstrate how leisure positively contributes to the spiritual well-being of an individual. It will demonstrate the impact of walking on a person's QoL. Literature on the following topics is explored: (i) international perspectives on spirituality, (ii) international perspectives on well-being, (iii) attributes of well-being, (iv) elements influencing QoL, and (v) perceptions of QoL. The chapter will be concluded with a brief overview of the most important findings gleaned from these sources.

3.2 Concepts and definitions

Although spirituality is not unique to academic discussion, the aim of defining spirituality, well-being and the influence of spirituality on wellbeing is to recapture concepts and definitions of spirituality and well-being. This section will examine scholarly conversations on the perceptions of spirituality and well-being. The correlation between spirituality and well-being and the influences of spiritual well-being are explored.

3.2.1 *Defining spirituality*

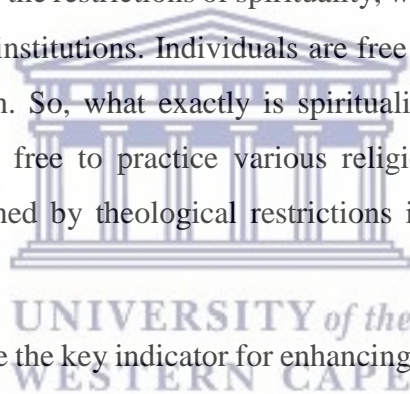
Spiritual walking is a unique experience. Whether it is done individually or collectively, the end goal is purposeful and universal. The deliverables of the experience is some form of expectation. Cathleen Kneen (1990:67) research concludes that spirituality entails respect for the earth and harmony with natural forces. She discusses the sun, moon plants, and animals as part of nature who shares gifts of nourishment with human beings. Tisdell (2003:81) proposes that spirituality is a journey toward wholeness, and Devereux and Carnegie (2006:48) hold that, within the scope of today's hyper-modern world, secularism and spirituality can coexist more

naturally in future. The latter implies that, when considering the idea of pilgrimage and its relationship to well-being, the individual's comprehension should exist at a meta-level that combines the secular and spiritual. This concept acts on both a secular and spiritual level. Pilgrimage is about more than just visiting a sacred destination; it is about what occurs along the way.

This means that pilgrimage is accepted for more than only visiting holy places: it is done also for that which occurs on the physical and spiritual path. The suggestion is that secularisation and spirituality will interconnect in the future in the view of today's new modern climate. The synergy between the physical, spiritual and the new modern climate will become easier with the expansion of boundaries. Spirituality incorporates both secular and multi-faith views on people's interactions as a concept of personal well-being within communities (Devereux and Carnegie, 2006:48-49). Cohen (1988) argues that mass tourism seems to have an adverse influence on the religious fundamentalism or extent of spirituality of people who live in tourist areas. Cohen claims that the influence is commonly materialistic. It distorts local religious devotion as well as beliefs in the sacredness and viability of sacred sites, practices, and traditions. The pilgrimage experience is typically associated with spirituality, which is one of the aspects of pilgrimage. The concept of spirituality often is seen as the sole protection of religion, but rather as pertaining to things that are not worldly or material (Cohen, 2006:38).

Birkholz (1997:26-29) defines spirituality in his research as a relationship with God. The definition is derived from his Christian perspective on the line of communication with Christ. It is to experience Christ at a personal level. The author refers to the personal level as an intimate level, namely living for God as an act of love for God. Walking and a journey within the context of spirituality are referred to by Maddrell as a relationship with God. Spending time with God is a way to develop a relationship with him. Pilgrimages are known as opportunities to experience social interactions through God's spirituality and stillness. This can all be engaged through walking, singing, or praying (Maddrell, 2010). Spirituality is the will to renounce oneself from being burdened. Walking develops the spirit. Spirituality is not the interest in oneself, but the fulfilment of God's wishes. Even though we miserably fail, and still try to live a religious life, we attempt to be good Christians, because Christ was the perfect spiritual human being. Spirituality has a positive underpinning: walking closer with God and forming a better relationship with him. People are walking consciously to connect with him as an act aimed at encountering spirituality (Power, 2015:51).

Even though Kato and Prozano (2017) stipulate that pilgrimage take on different forms and shapes, many pilgrims walk for religious reasons. Houtman and Mancini (2002) suggest that religion is still very much alive. Also in modern times, pilgrimage has taken on the role of spirituality and spiritual practices. Spiritual growth and transformation are on the increase. Kato and Prozano define modern spirituality as the disconnection from institutional religious authorities. However, it cannot be assumed that this is the case globally. These authors confirm that the range of participants of spirituality is increasing. Religious travel is becoming increasingly common, as demonstrated not only by an increase in religiously driven travel to holy sites, but also by the merging of New Age spirituality in which pilgrims travel (Rountree, 2002). Okamoto (2015:16) views this as the liberalisation of faith by. According to him, this is moreover significant in view of the transition in religion's social status. It is a transition from the public domain to the individual's personal domain. Another result is religious customisation, where individuals are now free to embrace or deny certain aspects of their own belief. Individuals are also free to incorporate religious elements with their own spiritual practice. Heelas (2006) refers to the restrictions of spirituality, which are conformed to a sphere of membership from religious institutions. Individuals are free to identify their own spiritual lives because of this affiliation. So, what exactly is spirituality? It is a matter of personal preference. Human beings are free to practice various religious practices as they see fit. Spirituality is no longer confined by theological restrictions imposed by external religious institutions.



Spirituality has been found to be the key indicator for enhancing and increasing multiple levels of organisational success and accomplishments (Usman and Danish, 2010:185). Walking different routes and distances creates a required sense of accomplishment. Long routes undertaken with non-religious motive, self-fulfilment, health, and well-being lead to a sense of accomplishment. This is different from a materially dependent lifestyle. Characteristics of today's pilgrimages include spirituality as a fundamental component and, in a way; they also promote ethical ways of engagement with the world. This engagement creates and promotes an all-inclusive understanding of social and environmental sustainability (Collins-Kreiner, 2010:247).

Von Balthasar (1967), as cited by Devereux and Carnegie (2006:50), itemises three aspects of spirituality:

- 1) Interest in truth and meaning of existence through actual personal experiences;

- 2) Using such experiences to articulate and satisfy ourselves in the universe and encourage and empower others; and
- 3) Acknowledgement of some significant authority outside ourselves that directs one's reflection and behaviour.

The term "higher power" is not always affiliated with God in the religious context. Rather, it involves a cultural identity in the context of Marxism or Gaia. The essence of spirituality continues to evolve. Despite indications that churches and synagogues are managing change on the surface, spirituality evolves. The deeper meaning of spirituality seems to be moving in a new direction in response to changes. Spirituality has become vastly complex, where each person seeks his or her own way. One form of spirituality seems more secure, the other appears to be less constraining. This difference does not make one more desirable than the other. Both types of spirituality offer freedom. A spirituality of habitat can provide healing and even light-heartedness because of the opportunity to share responsibilities with other inhabitants of the earth (Wuthnow, 1998:1-5).

There is some degree of expectation around spiritual walking. The latter proposes an ideology of finding oneself and fixing a disturbed, restless, and unnurtured soul. This sense of spirituality that comes with pilgrimage walking broadens spiritual and religious possibilities. Extant literature shows that there is a distinct connection between a relationship with God, an association with a pilgrimage journey, and spirituality or spiritual well-being. Scholars describe spirituality as a means of strengthening organisations, achieving goals, and defining pilgrimage in today's world. However, there is a disagreement in the discussion about the perception of spirituality. The debates all hold spirituality to be a disconnection from religious institutions and the concomitant restriction of religious affiliations.

3.2.2 *What is well-being?*

The definition of well-being is a topic that has been well researched. There are similarities and differences debated by scholars on the definition of well-being. According to Pollard and Lee, individual features

of an intrinsically positive state have been used to describe well-being (happiness). It has also been described on a scale from positive to negative, similar to how self-esteem is measured. Well-being may also be described in terms of one's environment (standard of living), the absence of well-being (depression), or collectively (shared understanding). A cohesive concept of well-being is needed.

To that end, individual well-being may be identified and operationalised within a particular domain (physical, social, cognitive, or psychological) (2003:64).

These three items of well- are subjectivity, eudemonia, and the idea of hedonism. These three values are interrelated. Subjectivity is to say that well-being depends on the person self, where eudemonia is of the opinion that an individual works at his or her own well-being. Hedonism is dependent on a specific teaching to enjoy well-being.

Well-being is considered as a mode of subjectivity. It means that the thought behind it is that people assess themselves. The concept of subjective well-being has been used interchangeably with the concept of “happiness” (Deci and Ryan, 2008:1). Waterman (1993) refers to well-being as eudemonia. This is to live well or the actualisation of a human being’s potential. In other words, the focus is on not well-being as an outcome, but on the process of fulfilling the criteria to live well. Barkow *et al.* (1992) refer to well-being as an experience. This view complies with the standard social science model, which relates to the human organism. It however gains its meaning with the compliance of social and cultural teachings.

However, subjective theories of well-being are problematic. The value of well-being through actions contributing to well-being is questionable. Subjective theories have difficulty in maintaining accountability for the determining principle of well-being (Tiberius and Hall, 2010:212). Kashdan *et al.* (2008) argue that eudemonia is disconnected from the objective notion of happiness, which makes the consistency of well-being impossible. Hedonism is a subjective theory in that it says that well-being is made up of pleasant ways of living and that nothing can contribute to well-being unless it also contributes to pleasure (Tiberius and Hall, 2010:213).

In Christian (Protestant and Catholic) countries, there is a clear connection between religion and spirituality and happiness. However, it is unclear which elements of religiosity are related to life satisfaction. Spirituality has frequently been overlooked in the field of subjective well-being studies because it has been believed that it cannot be examined critically (Cohen, 2002; Van Dierendonck and Mohan, 2006). By concentrating on spirituality as an intrinsic asset, Van Dierendock (2004) suggests spiritual well-being to be an aspect of eudaimonic health. For example, spiritual devotion, such as prayer and meditation, is important in the process of obtaining inspiration, support, and guidance. Inner resources entail the inner dimensions of a person that produce an individualised understanding of one’s inner self as well as a sense of

belonging to a deeper spiritual dimension (Richardson, Gibson, and Parker, 2003). Spirituality and religiousness were favourably associated with elements of hedonistic and eudaimonic well-being. However, stronger ties emerged between spirituality and well-being than between religiousness and well-being (Joshanloo, 2011:924).

3.2.3 The influence of spirituality on well-being

According to Shah and Marks (2004), well-being is more than happiness. Well-being is a feeling of gratification and happiness and the means to develop a person. Individual development contributes to community development. Well-being is influenced by community involvement as well as positive attitudes towards life. Money has little impact on happiness when basic needs are met. People who are materialistic in nature are less content than those who value other things (Kasser, 2002). The literature refers to humanity as the custodian of well-being. Well-being is linked to value-added initiatives. These initiatives include the possession of characteristics of goods and the enhancement of individual capacity (Klaasen, 2014:79). Different scholars have various views and opinions about dimensions of human development. Some of the components overlap and share common denominators. In other words, a common denominator is evident in the identification of the various dimensions of human development. According to Grisez *et al.* (1987), the elements of human development apply to fundamental human values such as existence, wisdom, and appreciation of beauty. Degrees of excellence in work and play, fellowship, self-integration, comprehensible self-determination, substantive purpose, and religion are further components of this. The components of the standard of excellence are related to life experiences, historical circumstances, relationships, tasks, aspirations, and values. The current debates follow a path in which all of these attributes channel to the recognition of a “distinct” heterogeneous collection of the most common and clear reasons for behaviour. It does, however, represent the entire spectrum of human functioning. Grisez *et al.* aver that the list is not sequential and can be changed as needed. It can be adjusted in the enhancement of “wholeness” and well-being to achieve human development.

Narayan *et al.* (2000) refer to the dimensions of human growth as the dimensions of well-being. They define well-being as material well-being, bodily well-being, social well-being, stability, freedom of choice and action, and psychological well-being. Deepa Narayan and her fellow authors identify dimensions of well-being, which includes psychological well-being. The latter includes the attributes of harmony, spiritual life, and religious observance. Health and well-

being have become trendy buzzwords that have infiltrated different circles almost obsessively. Everyone wants to be associated with physical well-being. Rising physical activity has been shown to enhance physical health and mental well-being (Neha, 2014). In addition, low-moderate levels of physical activity can improve psychological well-being (Lloyd and Little, 2010).

Human beings enjoy a sense of belonging and want to fit in. Walking and hiking are recreational activities they want to associate themselves with. This trend of association has become sort of status-orientated. It also creates a sense of belonging. Why is that? Proven study and research have found that the exposure to nature not only acts positively on the physical well-being but on an individual's spiritual well-being, too. Interaction with nature enhances and develops various elements of well-being. The elements to support well-being include recovery from spiritual weakness. It allows a person to manage stress, illness, and injury. The development of concentration and productivity in children relates to overall happiness and perceived well-being benefits (Doherty *et al.*, 2014:83). Research lacks the obligation to determine the perception of individuals about their lives. The focus is solely on the relationship between the natural environment and its impact as an attribute of well-being (Diener, 1995). Black *et al.* (2015) state that there are four categories to enhance the importance of these relationships, which include evaluation well-being, eudaemonic well-being, positive well-being, and experiential well-being. The individual's view of his or her existence is referred to as evaluative well-being. Eudemonic well-being refers to individuals' contributions in terms of behaviour or activities. Positive well-being is synonymous to happiness. Experiential well-being includes the pain and happiness of individuals' experience, as described by Gros:

Spiritual well-being is a lukewarm happiness, persistent as a monotonously happiness, just to be there, to feel the rays of a winter sun on your face. You hear the muffled creaking of the forest. Walking there Rousseau listened to the leap of his heart, no long assorted by worldly emotions, a heart no longer flected by society's desires but yielded at last to its primarily, natural beat. Nature and essentially solitary and happy for fullness, the simple well-being experienced there by Rousseau, purged of the exhausting artificial passions that rule the social world, when walking alone, must also be the feeling experienced by the first man in the timeless flow of peaceful and innocent days. And how much more intense that well-being was than the phoney excitements, the idiot satisfactions and vains' of the world (2014:72-74).

A study conducted by Black *et al.* (2015) concludes that being out in nature once a week may contribute positively to an individual's eudaimonic well-being. The activities we choose to

engage in may be as vital as our circumstances in life. This can play an imperative role in sustaining one's well-being.

Gunnell *et al.* (2014) advocate the need to introduce physical activity as a means of well-being development, and they hold that this is a recurring phenomenon. Literature and science on the development of well-being appear to be adding to the worldwide body of knowledge. It relates to the importance and significance of spiritual well-being. What would be the purpose of this new emphasis? Seeing is believing. For a person to understand the content and the context he or she needs to participate in the experience. Only then will one acknowledge the impact of physical activity on one's spiritual well-being. Such physical exercise and its predictors have become a widely explored subject in the last two decades for various populations. Gunnell *et al.* (2014) and Haworth and Lewis (2005) affirm that strategic goals are implemented to encourage physical exercise and, as a result, improve well-being. They agree that physical exercise has been shown to increase optimistic moods, personal emotional well-being, and positive affect.

“Mental and emotional well-being is about lives going well,” writes Huppert (2009). This entails a balance of feeling confident and being able to work effectively. Sen is of the opinion that freedom and capability are two components that comprise the basis of individual well-being. He argues that freedom creates opportunities and choices. The choices the individual makes are important attributes of a person's life. One's achievement is part of choices you make to enjoy life and freedom. These two characteristics relate to or have an effect on an individual's well-being. The measurement and evaluation of well-being open up the possibility of benchmarking the efficiency of inequality. The efficiency of well-being within inequalities entails the monitoring of overall change in a person's standard of living. It determines whether an individual's position of well-being has deviated from the norm. The assessment of an individual's enjoyment is measured by the person's progress (Sen, 1993).

Collins-Kreiner (2010) discusses spiritual walking as an instrument for fostering communities of passion. The simplicity and humble act of walking outdoors without technological influences or disturbances nurture the capacity to care for others. This deed of selflessness expands to the walker and brings about respect for the environment. Walking can be effective when it comes to developing a person's spiritual well-being. Walking as a way of life sets the pace and rhythm for spiritual development. Alex Norman (2012) itemises five categories of spiritual tourism. These include healing, a quest for personal discovery, a quest for knowledge, and the upholding

of a collective retreat. Norman avers that well-being is a top priority in everyday life. Individual enhancing components of everyday life constitute wellness activities, whether they are spiritual, passive or active. The tendencies towards evolving spirituality seek a combination of the old and ancient to be combined with modernity.

Synergy clearly establishes a bond or connection between aspects of well-being and spirituality. Well-being and spirituality are linked because of the various aspects that contribute to contentment and happiness. One finds therefore that well-being and spirituality complement each other with their interdependent attributes. Satisfaction, on the other hand, has no effect on one's well-being if basic necessities are met, according to the literature. Scholars continue to emphasise that research has proven that happiness is not dependent on material things.

3.3 The five pillars of well-being

Seligman (1998) introduces a change in the approach of psychology towards more optimistic psychological subjects such as well-being, contentment, hope, optimism, flow, pleasure, savouring, human strengths, and resilience. Well-being has long since been a research subject of concern. For the purpose of this section, the importance of positive psychology will be discussed. Positive psychology is the scientific study of positive human functioning and flourishing on multiple levels that include the biological, personal, relational, institutional, cultural, and global dimensions of life. The primary goal of positive psychology is to promote happiness and subjective well-being (Seligman, 2002). Positive psychology aims to evaluate well-being from a positive viewpoint, including the growth of subjective well-being and encouraging mental health and personal flourishing. In this development, well-being is described as “positive and sustainable processes that make organisations prosper and expand.” Well-being is a complex phenomenon that incorporates not only subjective, social, and psychological factors, but also health-related practices and economic factors (such as financial success). The range of approaches to the understanding of well-being has resulted in some very broad interpretations of the phenomenon, where scholars use their definition of “well-being” interchangeably with “satisfaction,” “happiness,” and “QoL” (Kun *et al.*, 2017:2).

According to Seligman's school of thought, then, well-being is the cultivation of one or more of the following five elements: positive emotion, commitment, relationships, purpose, and achievement.

3.3.1 The PERMA model

Seligman (2011) developed a new model of well-being, which he calls PERMA, which is an acronym formed from the first letters of each element. The five elements essential to well-being can be unpacked as follows.

Positive emotion: Good feelings motivate many human actions. Individuals read, travel, or do whatever makes them feel happy and joyful. Positive emotions enhance performance at work, boost physical health, strengthen relationships, and create optimism and hope for the future.

Within the context of the five elements of well-being, the attributes of the PERMA model can also play an important role when it comes to understanding pilgrimage walking and spiritual well-being. *Engagement:* This refers to attachment, involvement, concentration, and the level of inclination towards activities such as recreation, hobbies, or work. A key concept is flow: that is, when time seems to stand still and one loses one's sense of self and concentrates intensely on the present. In positive psychology, "flow" describes a state of utter, blissful immersion in the present moment. When we focus on doing the things we truly enjoy and care about, we can begin to engage completely with the present moment and enter the state of being known as "flow."

Relationships: Human beings have a strong inner need for connection, love, and physical and emotional contact with others. We enhance our own well-being by building strong networks of relationships around us with all the other people in our lives. Positive relationships, such as strong ties with family and friends or minimal connections with colleagues, lead to a sense of belonging.

Meaning and purpose: Meaning involves the use of strengths not for one's self, but to fulfil goals, which are perceived to be important. We are at our best when we dedicate time to something greater than ourselves. This could be volunteer work, belonging to a community or a civic or religious group, or learning for a specific goal. These activities have a sense of purpose, giving a compelling reason for individuals to do what they do.

Accomplishment: This signifies leading a productive, meaningful life. This pathway of living a meaningful life is pursued for its own sake, even when it brings no positive emotion, no meaning, and nothing in the way of positive relationships (Seligman 2011:18). To achieve well-

being, individuals must be able to look back on our lives with a sense of accomplishment: “I did it, and I did it well.”

The improvement of well-being is critical for human growth and psychology practice. In the practice of psychology, the development of the overall enhancement of well-being entails greater interest in the motivation that centres on positive functioning. Assessing well-being can be achieved in a variety of ways – there is no “one size suits all” solution to this problem (Kun *et al.*, 2017:3).

3.3.2 Positive emotions, leisure, and spirituality

Positive emotions and spirituality are two of the most important principles of positive psychology. Findings made by extant studies around tourism and quality-of-life indicate that leisure travel is a significant motivator of positive emotions (Mitas *et al.*, 2012; Coghlan, 2015). Van Capellen *et al.* (2014) also reveal that positive emotions help understand why spiritual people have higher levels of well-being. Ragheb (1993) discovered that the extent and degree of leisure fulfilment were positively related to perceived health, including spiritual wellness. Underlying attributes of spiritual healthy people include a sense of intent and ultimate value. Leisure is spiritual, as it is a comprehensive paradigm that forms and guides the directions that people can take in their lives. It warns them about and transforms them to the essence of life. It is spiritual in the sense that it can link people to a religious or holy influence while engulfing them in happiness (Joblin, 2009:103). This embraces being one with natural beauty, and even a feeling of togetherness with others, a profound regard for and devotion to something higher than oneself, a perception of fulfilment in life, high religious beliefs, morals, ethics, and principles, and passion, joy, harmony, hope, and fulfilment (Heintzman, 2000:42). Heintzman’s study views leisure to be essential for spiritual well-being, because it provides the time and space required for this to flourish (2000:46).

The benefits of activities in nature comprise not only the possibility of physical and emotional development, but also the possibility of spiritual growth (Fredrickson and Anderson, 1999:38). One of the most important outcomes of engaging in a wide variety of recreational activities is the enjoyment of positive moods and emotions (Hull, 1991). Numerous studies have suggested that leisure assists the reduction of depressive moods and emotions (Chubb and Chubb, 1981; Driver and Bruns, 1999; Kraus, 1998; Sharp and Mannell, 1996). Leisure activities lead to psychological, physical, social, and spiritual benefits (Iso-Ahola, 1994; Wankel, 1994). Kerr

et al. (2002) examined participants' emotional states before and after playing tennis and discovered that positive emotions improved while negative emotions declined.

Within the context of recreation and leisure, Iso-Ahola (1980) suggests that small groups encounter some measure of social harmony and bonding around recreation and leisure. Snowball and Szabo (1999) discovered that activities (rowing, cycling, and running), entertainment (stand-up comedy), and video streaming (geographical scenes) were all similarly successful towards improving participants' mood and anxiety levels. Physical movements such as walking, jogging, and aerobics have been shown to positively influence short and long-term health. However, the advantages of other forms of recreational activities are less noticeable and more difficult to ascertain (Coleman, 1997). Physical activity is not only meant for physical health, but also for mental well-being (Biddle *et al.*, 2000; Morgan, 1997).

3.3.3 Engagement, leisure, and spirituality

Ryff (2014) suggests that one of the overlooked facets of positive functioning is psychological well-being and constructive participation in life. Being directly involved in something meaningful and being respected on a personal, moral, social, and/ or cultural level is referred to as engagement (Hutchinson and Nimrod, 2012; Iwasaki *et al.*, 2015; Silverstein and Parker, 2002; Watters *et al.*, 2013).

Leisure can be interpreted as a physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, social, and/ or cultural intervention in one's life (Joblin, 2009:103). Dahl (1972) proposes that people need to be actively engaged with one another and that such engagement needs to be meaningful. It is important to understand leisure as a physical, mental, spiritual, and social involvement in one's life (Andrews, 2006). Andrews' research centres on the experience of leisure activities such as reading, relaxing in the sun, gardening, studying, walking, writing a poem, going to a café, shopping, and watching television (2006:141). Leisure encourages participation in life, because it fosters and sustains happy experiences (Joblin, 2009:106). The relevance of self-expression as a means of meaning-making is also found in phenomenological research on walking conducted by Wensley and Slade (2012). Expressing oneself, for example, besides artistic recreation, appears to support self-growth by fostering self-identity. In their research, Iwasaki, Messina, and Hopper (2018:33) found that church activities, recreational activities, walking, and nature encourage one. Leisure strengthens you and benefits in the healing process, making you stronger. Livengood (2009) reveals that isolated leisure practices were perceived as religious by New Paradigm Christians (including walking, knitting, and so on).

Heintzman (2000:60) opines that the balance between resting and being busy is beneficial for spiritual and overall well-being. Dahl (1972:72-73) claims that leisure is fundamentally spiritual. When people enjoy leisure, their spirits flourish and their compassion lights up brightly. Leisure promotes enlightenment as well as responding appropriately to one's life's meaning. It represents people's interests in life, specifically in the form of spirituality centred on an inner awareness of satisfaction and well-being (Joblin, 2009:95). In order to live life fully, Berker argues that one needs to be aware of this larger reality and act towards being part of this, which is sometimes referred to as "walking the spiritual path." Important in this respect is that, according to the New Spirituals,¹ there is not one path but multiple ones to one's own spirituality. The eventual goal is the same: finding one's inner spirituality (2012:46-47). Participation in positive practice, as well as the assumption that one's life has meaning, is powerful components for well-being (Seligman, 2002).

Leisure has been proposed to be important to human life and spirituality (Livengood, 2009:393). Brightbill (1965) cited by Stodolska and Livengood (2006) assert that religion, spirituality, and leisure share commonalities. Teaff (1994) holds that Christian spirituality flourishes in a leisurely environment where time and space are set aside for being as well as doing. Leisure may have a wide range of different and nuanced interpretations. One of these is said to be spiritual (Godbey, 1989). Schmidt and Little (2007) found that a number of variables such as environment, novelty, challenge, and ritual action improve participants' spiritual experiences. Respondents indicated concrete outcomes around participating in spiritual-related leisure activities, such as a connection to God, self, and others in addition to freedom and the discovery of personal beliefs.

3.3.4 Relationships, leisure, and spirituality

For newly converted Christians a personal relationship with God and the community of believers are very important: they experience these to be meaningful. Newly converted Christians can define themselves through the experience of love and acceptance. These relationships are performed in their leisure time by undertaking activities for the community, such as Bible study (Berkers, 2012: v).

¹ New Spirituals are a diverse group of people who are interested in the more-than-human, the larger reality we as humans participate in, together with the general aim for well-being in relation to themselves, others, and the world. These forms of belief are not institutionalised and aim at the individual, subjective experience (Baerveldt, 1996).

Religion, spirituality, and leisure are related, since the interactions between the three elements are all aimed at reaching a certain state of mind and well-being. Since people experience freedom during leisure, leisurely contexts provide opportunities for spiritual aspects of the self to be dealt with. Leisure has been described as a platform in which people can perfect themselves, be influenced by spiritual ideals, and develop relationships with themselves. An effect of leisure within the greater reality is to become more confident about who they are and the creation or finding of meaning in life (Schmidt and Little, 2007, Hawks, 1994). Relationships are not founded exclusively on similarity and a common life; variation or otherness is essential for a stable and satisfying partnership to occur. Individuals want to feel unique (Slife and Wiggins, 2009). Slife and Wiggins argue that the challenging part of all fears and anxieties is the fear of failure, fear of not fitting in, and the fear of not having meaningful relationships (2009:20). Erskine is of the opinion that individuals protect themselves against these fears and anxieties. Some individuals avoid relationships of closeness and intimacy because of these factors (1998).

Although individuals are deeply rooted in relationships, contexts are the most essential ways of relating to others. The practice of psychology is described as the application of stated principles. Practices relate to our environment, previous behaviour, and the behaviour of others. As a result, these practices are closely linked to the environment and the actions of others (Slife, 2004). Hence, relational needs can be driving forces for performing certain activities and engaging with spirituality and religion (Berkers, 2012:25). For instance, Jews are structured in their daily lives. Their lives are ordered and disciplined by the requirements of prayer, monthly visits to the *mikveh*, ritual activity, eating kosher food, keeping to types of dress, and keeping the Sabbath; therefore specific times are set for activities and keeping the (Valins, 2000). Leisure, like structured activities for Jews, is scheduled for a specified time to coincide with social events for communities (Schmidt and Little, 2007; Livengood, 2009).

Leisure is assumed to be a defining factor for one's identity and it is meaningful around behaviour. Religion, spirituality, and leisure can be related by means of their symbolic nature and the general aim for personal well-being, and spiritual experiences can be found in leisure activities such as wilderness activities in nature (Fox, 1999). Leisure studies take religion and spirituality into account, studying spiritual sensations during sport and wilderness experiences, the engagement with the church in leisure time, or the search for religious experiences while engaging in nature activities such as mountain hiking. While it is evident that there is a

connection between leisure, religion, and spirituality, not much study has been conducted on the relation between these themes (Berkers, 2012:13).

One of the activities performed is walking, an activity that nearly all spiritual respondents in a study conducted by Berker performed at least weekly. Walking is also performed often amongst newly converted Christians. However, these Christians do not visit nature that often, and that the majority live in urban areas, so that these walks will often entail casual strolls through neighbourhoods. Even though nature walks are non-existent in such cases, a visible number of social activities are involved (Berkers, 2012:54). The literature suggests that the rhythmic effect of the walking practice entails that you will enter a certain meditative state (Wunderlich, 2008; Slavin, 2003), which automatically stimulates the state of mind of the walker. Because prayer stimulates the walker and is a fairly normal activity, the walker will frequently start praying (Berkers, 2012:73).

3.3.5 Meaning, leisure, and spirituality

Meaning-making is mainly described as the procedure of obtaining something significant or meaningful in one's life. This wide description is used to avoid overlooking or removing contributing factors or procedures that non-Western people living in non-Western contexts can interpret as ways of making sense of their existence by means of leisure-like interactions (Iwasaki, 2008:232).

Even though church attendance has declined rapidly in the Western world since the 1960s, people continue to look for meaning-making in a life that is inspired by the belief in something beyond human beings, that is, some a belief in God (Berkers, 2012). Spirituality, according to Schmidt and Little (2007), is recognised as a generic term that entails the manner in which people search, create, embrace, and incorporate purpose in life. A further approach to meaning-making as related to leisure-like participation continues to be an understanding of its role for promoting positive identities, self-esteem, and spirituality. Spiritual types of leisure tend to be important for Muslims when it comes to encouraging positive identities and self-esteem, while these are linked to meaning-making (this includes cultural and spiritual meanings) as embedded within an Islamic perspective (Iwasaki, 2008:236-237). Sheykhi (2004) also records that an increasing number of Muslim visitors from the Middle East, and southern, central, and even eastern Asian countries visit Iranian Islamic historic sites. Sheykhi proposes that this form of religious and cultural tourism could help improve the cultural identity, spirituality, self-esteem, and life quality of various populations other than Muslim tourists.

Leisure may provide possibilities or places for meaning-making, but individuals finding themselves within differing life situations can draw different meanings from it (Shaw & Henderson, 2005). Many people need inspiration and meaning-making in their lives and find this in spiritual aspects, in the belief in God, or other outer-mundane aspects of life. Despite the prosperity we experience, the idea exists that people are not satisfied and are therefore looking for improved balance between material wealth and mental and physical well-being (Baerveldt, 1996). The American anthropologist Geertz argues that being religious is part of the way in which people shape their existence and the way in which they give this existence meaning, among others by using symbolism (1993). Religion is a cultural system, a collection of symbols that have meaning and influence people's behaviour and experiences. Thanks to this symbolism, religion is very much bound to the domain of imagination (Nissen, 2009; Berger, 1974).

Anthropologists are increasingly recognising that, in the attempt to comprehend religion in the modern world, it is important to explore not only explicitly religious spaces, but also spaces of daily life. The latter occasionally takes on religious functions and meanings or are infused and shaped by religious values (Berkers, 2012:12). Leisure may be used to express religious ideals, instilling a sense of belonging and obligation, while still presenting the main theological doctrines. This theological doctrine demonstrates that leisure, religion, and spirituality all deal with essentially comparable life situations on a regular basis. This is because individuals seek religious and spiritual experiences during their leisure time (Schulz & Auld, 2009). By seeking religious and spiritual experiences, leisure is given meaning centred on interaction with others that hold the same religion to be true (Berkers, 2012:22). During out-of-home leisure time, people encounter situational attributes: other human actors, but also material and non-material entities. For certain people, the dynamic connection between leisure activities and the reality of their surroundings is always an emotional experience. When materialism comes into contact with the individual's senses (sight, touch, sound, smell, and taste), the individual becomes aware of it. Individuals participate in activities that allow them to experience their surroundings in a unique way. The senses possessed by our bodies are the windows we have to receive flows of information about the world around us; and, by embodied experience, we attribute meaning to it (Cadman, 2009).

There appears to be a gap in existing knowledge about meaning-making in terms of leisure, specifically the way in which leisure can help people acquire valued meanings (Iwasaki,

2008:232). Mantero (2000) identifies leisure as a symbolic and significant practice in people's cultural life. Happiness and well-being require a sense of significance or intent (Baumeister and Vohs, 2002). A comprehensive study of the influences of leisure on meaning-making is a new field of research. Qualitative experiments on inventive leisure (Hegarty and Plucker 2012) and walking (Wensley and Slade 2012) discovered the importance of self-expression as a means of creating a sense of oneself. In a qualitative analysis of people suffering from mental illnesses. According to Iwasaki *et al.* (2015), creative activities encourage a connected, discovered, and hopeful/ empowered life, whereas poetry, church activities, and walking in nature promote a connected, discovered, and hopeful/ empowered existence.

3.3.6 Accomplishment, leisure, and spirituality

A study by Liu and Yu (2015:161) found that the most important benefits reported in commitments were a sense of accomplishment, health and fitness, and social affiliation. Recreational activity participants were able to enjoy substantial benefits and rewards such as physical well-being, spiritual fulfilment, self-actualisation, self-expression, group achievement, social relations, and associated opportunities. Intense leisure activity, according to Stebbins (1992, 1997), promotes self-actualisation, self-enrichment, self-regeneration or renewal, and a sense of accomplishment. In Schmidt and Little's study, participants reported sensations, internal strife, self- or fear-overcoming, and thoughtful reflection. Personal spiritual outcomes were reported by participants of the study such as greater awareness of spirituality, attachment, development, and freedom. Spiritual leisure experiences were among the outcomes, and they generated an array of emotional and cognitive responses to spiritual life experiences. The respondents in Schmidt and Little's study identified a combination of meaning, emotion, behaviour, responsiveness, knowing, accomplishment, wonder, and awareness so as to reconfigure their encounters with spiritual experiences (Schmidt and Little, 2007:240-241).

According to Lu and Argyle (1994), humans had higher levels of leisure satisfaction and well-being when they engaged in an ambitious, dedicated, and constructive leisure activity. The empirical examination of the relationship between leisure and spiritual well-being is significant, since the latter can be seen as a benefit of leisure as well as an improvement of the human condition (McDonald and Schreyer, 1991). Managers of natural areas and parks, for example, have been urged to prepare for the availability of opportunity to explore the spiritual

rewards of recreational activities in addition to other recreational incentives (Driver *et al.*, 1996).

Schmidt and Little (2007:235) found that participants' spiritual leisure became more conscious of themselves, others, and/ or God. Participants experienced a connection with God through walking and admiring nature. While nature was inspirational, the newness of walking in a different environment could also spark spiritual leisure experiences. Other participants realised that their daily walking ritual offered a life space for spiritual reflection. A participant found that meditation on some of the life issues was part of the walk. Another participant explained that the ritual of walking inspired her to reflect and "sort out who I am and where I am going. In that, I am being guided into the future" (Schmidt and Little 2007:237-240).

Positive feelings, according to Sweatman and Heintzman, were based on how participants felt about their experiences and, although many different feelings were expressed, they were all included under the rubric of positive feelings because the participants related these to their spirituality. Feelings frequently expressed by the participants were fun, happiness, safety, and self-esteem. One participant connected his spirituality with feelings of accomplishment (Sweatman and Heintzman, 2004:28).

The experience of spirituality is not limited to one society or country, but has a global distribution. The next section will address an international perspective on spirituality. It will discuss the effect of spirituality within a global context.

3.4 International perspective on spirituality

Kale (2004:92) believes that spirituality and religion are rarely debated in the light of globalisation. Spirituality and religion have an effect on the occurrences of internationalisation. Conversely, internationalisation has a major impact on these two variables. Spirituality and internationalisation are therefore reciprocal in their effects. These two aspects, along with other environmental factors (such as politics, technology, and economics), influence the cultural climate in which we live. Interestingly, most globalisation narratives have not studied the relationship between globalisation and spirituality (Friedman 1999; Stackhouse *et al.*, 2000).

Against the background of global ageing and increasing life expectancy, religiosity and spirituality have been recognised as important health attributes (Zimmer *et al.*, 2016:374). To date, numerous reports have focused on the relationship between religion and health rather than

spirituality and health (Lucchetti *et al.*, 2011). Nonetheless, spirituality and religiosity are two terms that are sometimes used interchangeably since they are both important parts of life (Krause, 2003). Spirituality, religion, and industrialisation all have a significant effect on the overall health and QoL of a growing number of the world's population (Fogel, 2000; Myers *et al.*, 2000; Spaniol 2002).

The overarching metaphor for spirituality over the ages and through civilizations has been that of a journey or a voyage. A journey or voyage involves leaving one's home country to visit another. Similarly, globalisation entails a journey through faraway places, whether physically, virtually, or symbolically. The analogy of a journey metaphorically demonstrates the connection between spirituality and globalisation. It has been highlighted by spiritualistic scholars such as Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1959) and, more recently, by social commentators such as King (2002) and Friedman (1999). Spirituality and religion have been critical towards creating an opportunity for globalisation. The earliest knowledge of crossing national boundaries was primarily spiritual in nature. Spirituality and religion have not only responded to globalisation, but have also played a part in influencing the process (Kale, 2004:96). Several other researchers also hold that both the search for emerging technologies and the drive for globalisation are religiously inspired (Bauwens 1997; Noble 1997; Friedman 1999).

Muldoon (2002) claims unequivocally that our comprehension of what is actually occurring would be distorted as long as we view globalisation in solely material terms. Globalisation, he claims, is the product of a worldview rooted in Western Europe's Christian past: "Globalisation occurs not just because Europeans developed global trade channels, but also because Europeans imagined all humanity as collectively establishing a unified society." Globalisation, according to contemporary theological thinkers, is a hindrance to true spirituality (Gaillardetz 2000; Groothuis 1997; Stackhouse *et al.*, 2000). Even though there are academic discussions concerning challenges, the necessity for solidification, spirituality, and the globalisation process is clear.

Globalisation has been fuelled by industrial transcontinental trades of goods and services. It helped promote and has been fuelled by a desire to export religious philosophies around the world by swapping priests, monks, and mullahs. Spirituality and religion always seem to have an inverse influence on global trade. The connection between spirituality and economic life, such as the link between globalisation and economic life, has been indelible throughout history. Spirituality and religion have always been associated with economic development (Kale,

2004:96). The trading and fishing communities prayed for a prosperous and fruitful journey. Religion and spirituality have influenced the practice of trade by trying to dictate the days and times of commerce. The exchange was extended to goods that can be traded and the people with whom one can trade (Mittelstaedt 2002).

Globalisation, on the other hand, seeks to disrupt the intrinsic connection between sacred time, sacred space, and sacred people shared by all religions of the world. This involves the apparently indisputable ties that have characterised all civilizations: backgrounds, people, and territories (Casanova 2001, 426). Globalisation not only provides an excellent opportunity for civilizations and world religions to break free from the confines of the nation-state. It resumes their international features and leadership roles on the global stage (2001:430-431).

The following section looks at well-being from an international perspective. The impact of well-being from a worldview perspective will be examined.

3.5 International perspective on well-being

Global disparity in well-being throughout countries has become a constant driver of the international economy ever since the start of the Industrial Revolution some 200 years ago (Van Zanden *et al.*, 2014:24). For a long time, the assessment of welfare by levels of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has been questioned. The Stiglitz, Sen, and Fitoussi study has given this controversy renewed momentum in recent years (2009). Today, there is a growing recognition that GDP statistics only provide a snapshot of the multifaceted complexity of well-being, while the latter is what counts in people's lives. Numerous traditional and contemporary quality-of-life metrics, including lifespan and educational attainment, have been proposed to complement GDP figures (Van Zanden, *et al.*, 2014:24-25). Diener *et al.* (2003) report that the group with the fewest resources was the happiest, while the group with the highest income was less happy. When it comes to promoting one's well-being, Smith and Razzell agree that less can be more. In a survey of football pool winners in England, he observed that satisfied individuals reported higher levels of happiness (1975).

Sen (1993) and Nussbaum (2000) articulate the underlying concepts for addressing well-being most clearly. Sen's theoretical framework is focused on the differentiation between functionings and capabilities. Functionings can be described as a person's actual accomplishments, that is, what he or she is able to do or be. In other words, they reflect an individual's actions and state of being centred on, for instance, being in good health, and being

able to move freely, and so on. According to Sen (1999), human well-being is dependent on a variety of functions and capabilities that allow people to live a good life. People can do very little without health and, without jobs; health simply limits people when it comes to living a good life. Certain variables, such as education or the ability to engage in society, are also significant, while income and health receive the greater consideration in most assessments of human well-being (Deaton, 2008:69).

Within the global community, the perception and association of well-being is under discussion. Even though there are some global tendencies in terms of disparities emerging around well-being, the concept of well-being remains a subjective one. Each person's definition of well-being is unique. The next sector will take a closer look at the attributes of well-being.

3.6 Attributes of well-being

Well-being is a variable that relies on various phenomena. As individuals, human beings decide on the boundaries and limitations of their well-being. Our perception and the importance we attach to well-being differs from person to person. This section of the discussion seeks to establish the attributes of well-being with reference to health, happiness, and freedom. Literature on the three attributes is explored and discussed below.

3.6.1 Health as an attribute of well-being

The condition of a person's health is critical to the preservation or enhancement of his or her well-being. Health is seen as one of the attributes of well-being. This attribute is often used to describe the process, the consistency of health care and the capacity to be active. It also allows the individual to communicate at the simplest level. Simplicity may be a variable that is closely related to one's standard of living (Hirschberg *et al.*, 2001:451). To understand mental well-being, the definition of physical well-being must be explored, and vice versa. The connection between mental well-being and physical well-being encourages people to live healthier lifestyles. Mental and physical well-being is two major elements that can be applied to promote overall well-being. People are able to implement healthier lifestyle choices because of the health importance and the relationship between mental and physical health. (Holley *et al.*, 2011:84).

Women's psychological well-being can be enhanced by engaging in low to moderate physical activities, according to studies. Leisure may outline priorities elements such as social support and leisure-generated personality, as per the data (Coleman and Iso-Ahola, 1993; Lloyd and

Little, 2010). Physical practices, such as engaging in physical activities, have the ability to increase women's psychological well-being. By participating in fitness and physical activity programs, women of all ages and socioeconomic backgrounds enhance their psychological well-being (Coleman and Iso-Ahola, 1993; Lloyd and Little, 2010).

When women engage in low to moderate physical activity, they are more likely to engage in favourable mental health routines. Other components of physical activity could be more important predictors of greater psychological well-being in practice. This is related to how often women participate in physical exercises. Little *et al.* (2003) report that, after casual engagement in outdoor adventure activities, women feel more confident, energetic, and competent. Research has proven that an increase in physical activities became a trend among women involved in physical activities. According to leisure studies, women need to make time for themselves away from their everyday lives by means of leisure. Mothers who participated in physical activity programs were able to build their own various recreational environments (physically and psychologically). It allowed them to respect themselves as individuals, challenge personal freedom restrictions, and interact effectively with their daily lives and responsibilities as mothers (Currie, 2004; Miller and Brown, 2005).

Extant literature therefore reports that health is an important attribute of well-being. The sustainability of one's health, whether it is of a physical or psychological nature, contributes to QoL. As a result, the next attribute, happiness, plays an important role in fostering well-being.

3.6.2 Happiness as an attribute of well-being

“Happiness as an attribute of well-being creates a thrill of peacefulness. It is a tedious day to feel the rays of a winter sun on your face.” Happiness is a feeling of contentment that comes from a state of well-being. The warmth that an individual perceives is a sensation of fulfilment (Gros, 2014:72-73). Gros (2014:78) suggests that well-being becomes an essential matter of no longer expecting anything. Letting time come to one, and surrendering to the floodtide of days and the exhaustion of lights. Well-being requires consistency and moderate movement without shocks or pauses. When a person's life is going particularly well, he or she experiences high levels of personal well-being (the state of being content, healthy, or happy) or welfare (a person's health, happiness, and fortunes) (Raibley, 2012:1111). Joy, pleasure, serenity, and happiness are all valued factors in today's life. The advisors of antiquity took care to draw distinctions between Cyrenaicists, Epicureans, Sceptics, and Platonists. Cyrenaicists,

Epicureans, Sceptics, and Platonists: each school's way of thinking presented a distinct state of fulfilment based on joy, happiness, or serenity (Gros, 2014:139-140).

When one sets out to walk for more than a few days, say, more than a week, one question keeps arising as you pack your backpack. Is this necessary? While we were able to list the different types of well-being, it might be a nightmare if you are overburdened with information. The result is the same question, repeatedly: do I really need this? (Gros, 2014:189). Happiness, on the other hand, has two fundamental flaws when it comes to reflecting on well-being. First, happiness as held by the utilitarian tradition is a mental state that excludes other facets of a person's well-being. If enjoyment is achieved through mental conditioning, the individual will be regarded as successful from this standpoint. Second, as a mental-state concept, happiness may provide a very restricted view of other mental processes that are directly related to a person's well-being, such as stimulation, excitement, and so on. When this line of thought is taken up, the subsequent step is to look at the relationship between a person's sense of worth and the value of the person's well-being. Furthermore, mental activities include assessing one's personal life. A reflective activity examines the function of valuation in determining a person's well-being. This key element of a person's well-being is the functional direction that he or she follows. Clearly, it cannot be viewed solely in terms of the happiness that such reflection produces (Sen, 1985:188-198). Daniel Haybron (2008) proposes that happiness is a feeling, an emotional disposition, produced by positive moods and emotions. Happiness is a state of being. It consists of psychic affirmation. A happy life is one that is emotionally fulfilled. The concept of happiness as a state of being is a positive response to one's life and a central component of well-being (Badhwar, 2014:36).

In summary, scholars confirm that happiness is an essential attribute when it comes to achieving well-being. It is a distinct or specific variable that relates to one's mental state and positive functioning in order to accomplish a goal or objective. However, happiness ignores other aspects of an individual's well-being. The freedom to be able to achieve well-being is an important element of it. The subsection below reflects on freedom as an attribute of well-being.

3.6.3 Freedom as an attribute of well-being

Well-being freedom is a broad concept that encompasses the freedom to obtain happiness. Sen, known as the philosopher of freedom, proclaimed freedom of well-being as an attainment, which is referred to as well-being freedom. A person's well-being reinforces the principle of freedom, and this reinforcement of freedom is known as well-being freedom. The

reinforcement of freedom to enjoy well-being is important. Failure to adequately to exercise one's freedom to contest well-being does not suggest a lack of competence to understand or react. The meaning of well-being is defined as the state of being happy or satisfied as a result, a person's well-being requires freedom. The type of advantage a person will have in terms of being able to pursue his or her own happiness. Therefore, the position of a person's happiness cannot be absorbed by the analysis of actual well-being accomplishments or the agency freedom. The definition of "well-being freedom" has a strong significance for responsible adults in assessing a person's options for improving his or her own gain. "Agency freedom" refers to a person's ability to do and attain whatever aims or values he or she considers significant. The agency component of a person cannot be understood without considering his or her goals, purposes, allegiances, obligations, and-in a broad sense-the individual's understanding of what is good. Whereas well-being freedom refers to the freedom to pursue a certain goal, such as well-being, agency freedom is broader in scope because it is not limited to a single type of goal. Agency freedom refers to a person's ability to accomplish anything he or she chooses to do as a responsible agent. In the case of responsible adults, commending well-being with equal opportunities of well-being necessitates strengthening an individual's assessment of the well-being component of freedom (Sen, 1985:201-205). According to Esposito and Zaleski (1999), increased economic freedom increases the QoL as assessed in terms of life expectancy and literacy. Norton (1998) observed that the reinforcement of freedom and the position of well-being lead to freedom of well-being. Significant economic independence, according to Stroup (2007), leads to increased individual economic well-being. Increases in economic freedom and institutional efficiency, according to Inglehart *et al.* (2008) and Bjornskov *et al.* (2008), improve levels of satisfaction and well-being. Economic freedom fosters an atmosphere in which economic success thrives, which increases individual well-being (Belasen and Hafer, 2013:57).

As per Markus and Schwartz (2010:344), the stronger a person's rights and freedom are, the better off they are. People appreciate more freedom and independence when they have more choices. As a result, the greater the number of options available to people, the happier they are.

Freedom to participate as active individuals creates various opportunities to enhance welfare and well-being amongst community members. Literature confirms that, when it comes to achieving well-being, freedom creates advantageous opportunities for individuals. Improvements in economic freedom are linked to increased overall well-being. All of the well-

being characteristics stated above, such as health, happiness, and freedom, have the ability to complement one another in the pursuit of optimum well-being. Attributes of well-being have the ability to influence and enhance people's QoL. The following section delves into the factors that affect the latter.

3.7 Elements that influence quality of life

QoL is an individual's subjective assessment of his or her life situation. Individual goals, desires, standards, and concerns are influenced by the culture and value systems in which a person lives. The latter aspects are general categories influenced by a number of factors. The subjective assessment is measured by the quality of life of individuals and the variables measured includes the individual's physical health, psychological condition, degree of freedom, social relationships, and connection to important attributes of their world (WHOQoL Group, 1995: 1404). A person's spirituality is influenced by his or her current state of being. Spirituality is influenced by an individual's general well-being. Participating in a pilgrimage benefits a person's quality of life.

Engagement in pilgrimage can entail a spiritual journey that gives greater value to a person's real-world experience of improvement in their life. Pilgrimage is described as "a vessel that motivates our journey across a slew of symbols for both life and experience" (Ruf, 2009:279). Pilgrimages, according to Indian psychologists, lead to ageing people's subjective well-being (Maheshwari and Singh, 2009). In Sweden, healthcare professionals use the pilgrimage metaphor for patients who have life-threatening cancer even when nurses are stressed out (Courtney, 2015:176).

Amongst the most noticeable features of contemporary spirituality is the detachment from conventional religious authorities on issues that were historically under their influence, such as the requirements of spiritual existence and moral expressiveness (Kato and Prozano, 2017:245). Walking places us on life's vertical axis. Walking allows one to avoid the concept of identity as well as the desire to be someone else. The liberation of walking comes from not being, since the walking body has no past (Gros, 2014:6). Presently, walkers moving in different lengths walk trails with no apparent religious motivation. Walkers engage in walking for self-fulfilment, health, and wellness to attain a sense of achievement. Even if only for a few days, walking is a viable alternative to a materially based and energy-intensive lifestyle. Today's pilgrimage is circumscribed by spiritual characteristics. It is encouraged in the same

way that moral ways of dealing with a position are advocated. This idea encourages a more comprehensive view of environmental stewardship (Kato and Prozano, 2017:247).

Human growth, according to Alkire (2010: 24-25), aims to extend people's freedoms to do and be what they appreciate in life. This existence of appreciation seeks to empower people to actively engage in development processes in a collective environment. As a result of human progress, people live longer and healthier lives, enjoy educational opportunities, and experience good quality of life. The "primary space" of human development is people's lives. The importance of resources, revenues, agencies, and political or social commitments cannot be overstated. Ultimately, success is determined by the lives people lead and the abilities they have. The government aims to address individuals' political and economic problems in order to increase the quality of life for the poor. Gros (2014:89-90) suggests that one is confronted with the development of a lust for unlimited wealth. You are faced with the blind capitalisation of material goods. What is the cost of a good life? What is the value of a person's life, and how does cost affect overall well-being? The cost of something is the extent to which it involves that which I would call life. What are the benefits of a long walk? Nothing saleable is produced, and no social service is rendered for which compensation should be paid. In this respect, walking is futile and sterile. In traditional economic terms, it is time wasted, dead time in which no wealth is produced. The poor's social, psychological, and material deficiencies contribute to national and international variations in health quality (Marmot & Wilkinson, 1999). Efforts to correct the above issues often fail. This is because the quality of life is based on relationship satisfaction that is often ignored (Lane, 1994). Unlike happiness, quality of life is neither a disorder nor a state of mind or being. Quality of life is the relationship between the quality of conditions and the quality of an individual's circumstances. A high quality of life is intrinsically valuable and is determined by a person's character (Offer, 1996:257).

Various scholars therefore explain how different elements influence quality of life. The evidence at hand speaks of an initial six domains of well-being influencing pilgrimage. To name but a few, the sixth domain refers to spirituality, religiousness, and personal beliefs. Literature concurs that pilgrimage enhances a person's quality of life. Pilgrimage walking, for the purpose of this discussion, should be viewed as an influence on the attainment of quality of life. It is clear that the understanding of possibilities is affected by one's quality of life.

3.8 Perceptions of quality of life

The World Health Organisation's definition of QoL focuses on the overall perception of an individual's role in life. This relates to their objectives, interests, beliefs, and concerns. This addresses many of the critical areas of life that encourage people to meet their expectations, such as psychological and spiritual aspects (Saxena and Orley, 1997). QoL centres on how well human needs are met, or the extent to which individuals or groups experience happiness or disappointment in specific areas of life (Papachristou and Rosas Casals, 2015:3).

Descriptions of QoL descriptions are as varied and contradictory as the methods used to measure it. This concept is problematic as different people value different things (Huxley, 1986; Cox *et al.*, 1992). George and Bearon (1980) allude to four basic aspects of QoL. Two of the four parameters are objective, while the other two are subjective to the individual: general health and functional status; socioeconomic status; life happiness; and self-esteem. QoL is a wider term and examines whether disease or disability restricts the capacity of a person to play a normal role (Hofstede, 1984:1240). Therefore, Abrams (1973) interprets "QoL" as the level of customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction that people have in different aspects of life. Andrews (1974) connects it with the extent to which enjoyment and happiness define humanity. Calman (1984) contends that QoL could only be interpreted and measured in terms of the individual. Although the components that comprise QoL are subjective, a method in which participants develop their own meanings may be a more suitable measure of it. Calman describes an individual's QoL as the difference between perception and reality (1984:124).

The term "QoL" comprises a wide range of information, such as physical, functional, emotional, and social well-being. Its composition ranges, but it incorporates social support, leisure activity management, family functioning, and intimacy, including sexuality. Due to the extremely varied array of the phenomenon, it challenges understanding and agreement among researchers about its nature (Cella, 1994:187-188). QoL is a multi-level and abstract term that encompasses both macro-societal and socio-demographic factors. It entails micro-concerns such as individuals' interactions, situations, well-being, social well-being, beliefs, expectations, and psychology. As a result, it entails a set of objectives and subjective aspects that engage in well-being and influence quality of life (Lawton, 1991). These dimensions are in line with the degree of physical, psychological, social, activity, material, and structural needs as well as satisfaction (Hörnquist, 1982). The fulfilment of a person's values, desires, and needs by accomplishing his or her capabilities or lifestyle is referred to as QoL. It is the sense of an

individual's place in life. It is related to the context of their community and value systems, as well as their priorities, desires, standards, and concerns. In other words, subjective QoL represents a person's overall understanding of and satisfaction with the way things are in their life. This also includes the overall enjoyment of life (Emerson, 1985:282; Whoqol Group, 1998:551; Wood-Dauphinée *et al.*, 2002:137; National Institute of Health (NIH), n.d.). Individualistic understanding, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), (2014), influences a person or groups' physical and mental well-being over a period of time.

There is no agreement on how to define QoL when it comes to health. Definitions vary from those that place a holistic focus on patients' social, mental, and physical well-being following care (Greer, 1984) to those that explain the effect of a person's well-being on his or her ability to live a fulfilling life (Bullinger *et al.*, 1993). The interpretation of one's own QoL differs from person to person and changes over time. Aspirations for QoL are intimately connected with people's relationships with their surroundings. Evaluations of people's QoL are made within horizons of possibilities they see for themselves and are therefore a fundamental part of their identity (Hofstede, 1984:1240-1241).

In summary, scholars discuss the conception and impression of QoL and end up with some claims and discussions. QoL is a perception held by the person. His or her aspirations, desires, beliefs, and interests are connected to individuality. Their insight around this is based on individual needs and the way in which their requirements are met. QoL has a psychological and spiritual aspect. It is also a method to measure outcomes, since different people value different things. The standardisation of such a tool could be instrumental in determining QoL.

3.9 Conclusion

Definitions and perceptions around a relationship between spirituality, well-being, and QoL were explored here at the hand of different scholarly debates and discussions. These show that individuals experience the effect of spirituality as a means of well-being in diverse manners. The Seligman PERMA model, which includes the five pillars of well-being (positive emotions, commitment, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment), was found to be an effective guide for the present study. The PERMA model was explained in detail. It shows how the impact of leisure as a social practice makes a significant contribution to the individual's spiritual well-being. Literature on the global perspective on spirituality, the global perspective on well-being, the attributes of well-being, the elements that influence QoL, and perceptions of QoL were

discussed. The subsequent chapter centres on the influence of spirituality on well-being and QoL. Chapters prior to Chapter 4 are clearly interrelated. There is a strong connection between Chapters 3 and 4.



Chapter 4

Walking a personalised COVID trail: Research design and methodology

4.1 Introduction

Many scholars have written about the concept of research design and methodology. The purpose of this chapter is to determine the research design and methodology for the present project. Growth in almost every discipline of study is engendered by the benefits provided by scientific assessment. Research is also seen as the backbone of scientific development. The broad aim of study is to address questions and gain new information. Research is the focal point used in nearly all fields of science to broaden information horizons (Marczyk, DeMatteo, and Festinger, 2005:1). Prevalent research is a quest for information. Research may also be described as a scientific and systematic exploration for relevant knowledge on a specific subject. Science is, in reality, the art of scientific inquiry (Kothari, 2004:1). In this chapter, my research design will be clarified and mapped out. The classification of the framework of this research design is empirical, ethnographic, and autoethnographic in nature. Primary data was collected that constitute a combination of qualitative (textual) and quantitative (numerical) information. However, the majority of data collected steer towards those that are qualitative in nature. The degree of control relates to medium and low control (Babbie and Mouton, 2005:146).

Furthermore, the concept and the reason for the methodology will be explained. The methodological aspect includes the role and place of theory in the design. This includes the method of data collection, modes of observation, and techniques used for data collection. The explanation of the methodology will elucidate the strengths/ advantages and limitations of this design type (Babbie and Mouton, 2005:147). In a qualitative study, research design should be a reflexive process operating at every stage of a project (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 24). Every type of empirical research has an implicit, if not explicit, research design (Yin, 1994:19). The purpose of empirical research can be to explore an interest, test a specific idea, or validate a complex theory (Babbie, 2001:116). The present study is empirical, ethnographic, and autoethnographic in nature, which includes participant and visual observation. The aim of qualitative studies is usually to provide in-depth description of a group of people or community. The mode of observation and the source of data were “participant observation” (for

understanding or explanation of participant observation see 1.4 of Chapter 1) and “visual observation” conducted by means of semi-structured interviews. The strength of this type of research involves the gaining of in-depth insights. The limitations of the research include non-standardisation of measurement and data collection, while performing the analysis was time-consuming (cf. Mouton, 2001:148).

Ethnographic and autoethnographic research are particular forms of qualitative research. The latter term includes the processes for accomplishing it, involving original fieldwork, while always requiring the re-organisation and editing of material for presentation. The idea of introducing the process of ethnographic and autoethnographic research is also a proclamation of intent. Anyone who engages in ethnography also assumes responsibility for participating in the continuing dialogue to define and redefine it both as process and as product (Wolcott, 1990:47). Autoethnographic research is the narrative of the participating researcher and is communicated through fieldwork. The feasibility of cultural self-analysis is based on the notion that the self is an integral part of a community instead of an autonomous, self-sufficient individual (Chang, 2016:26). The process of the research design and methodology demonstrates the ethnographic and autoethnographic sequence in terms of different steps of how this research was conducted. The aim of the rest of this chapter is to discuss and elaborate on various elements that map out the journey of the research design and methodology.

4.2 Research design

Scholars such as Kothari (2004:2) explain that the purpose of research is to provide information in response to questions through the understanding of scientific methodologies. Kothari’s viewpoint alludes to research as the main objective of the study. It allows the study to figure out facts that are unknown and have not yet been established. The two pillars of science are logic and observation. A scientific understanding of the world must (1) make sense of and (2) correspond with what we observe. Both elements are essential to research and relate to three major aspects of the overall enterprise: theory, data collection, and data analysis (Babbie, 2001:10). As stated, this study performs empirical research, including ethnographic and autoethnographic research, which are qualitative in nature.

4.2.1 Empirical research

Empirical research is essential in the present time, since most people actually believe only in what they can see, hear, or experience. It is used to verify several hypotheses and enhance

individual understanding. The goal of empirical research is to continue to improve a variety of disciplines. According to Kothari (2004:4), empirical study depends on experience or observation alone, often without due consideration for method or theory. Bradford and Gordon (2022) point out that the scientific method is strongly centred on an empirical approach. The empirical method is a scientific-proof strategy that focuses on direct observation and experimentation for the acquisition of information. In the empirical approach, scientific assessments are formulated based on evidence obtained from direct observation and experiments (Vosloo, 2014:316). Empirical studies include the rationale and objectives for the study, the hypotheses, and the method, which includes the description of research design. Study sample, and research procedures; and the results include the presentation of data, statistical analyses, and tests of hypotheses as well as discussion that relates to the major findings, interpretations of data, conclusions, limitations of the study, and areas for future research (Marczyk, DeMatteo, and Festinger, 2005:268). Babbie and Mouton acknowledge that research is driven by the empirical testing of a hypothesis (2001).

Empirical research contributes something new and unique to the academic realm in one way or another. The scientific method of exploring and analysing data verifies facts about the topic of the study. My original study was to explore the effect of pilgrimage walking experienced by participants on the Pfanner Trappist trail, located in Mariannhill, KwaZulu Natal. The purpose was to establish the effect of pilgrimage walking on the spiritual well-being of participants, in my capacity as a participatory observer. The location of my fieldwork and research however had to deviate to another location. Why was that? The global pandemic, caused by the virus called COVID-19, made it impossible for me to conduct my research in KwaZulu-Natal. The different levels of lockdown restricted citizens from freely moving around. However, these restrictions were not exclusive to South Africa; they were in fact a global occurrence. Due to the spreading of the virus, restrictions were enforced and imposed randomly, which meant that you could not plan. This was the reason for the change in the location of my study. The traditional and conventional way of walking a pilgrimage was taboo and not on the table for my study any longer. A combination of global uncertainties and the need for the conventional way of doing things (see Pfanner Trappist trail objective as mentioned above) created challenges around conducting the required empirical research. The challenge for me was to figure out a way forward. I had to think of what to do and how to do it within the limitations and boundaries created by COVID.

At the same time, so many of my contacts became restless and frustrated. So many of them faced different challenges and issues because of the pandemic. Some family members lost either their jobs or their lives. For weeks in a row, statuses on social media would be updated on a regular basis about loved ones who had lost their lives or had tested positive for the virus. Requests for prayers for loved ones that ended up in hospital or intensive care formed part of our daily lives. COVID took a mental and psychological toll on so many. This was not only limited to South Africans: it affected the world. COVID and its mental and physical destruction were on everybody's lips. Traditional pilgrimage was not even an option of choice any longer. I am a walker and a pilgrim and I know the positive effect of walking on my physique and on my mental wellness. The challenge was how I would get people to walk a personalised pilgrimage in these COVID-infested times. How would I get people to consistently walk within a limited area or space, moving around every day, for a period of consecutive days, to experience the effect of walking on their mental well-being?

4.2.2 Qualitative research

This study is embodied by qualitative research, which includes work that does not seek to determine findings by means of a numerical model or interpretation. Qualitative research usually includes interviews and observations, done without quantitative calculation (Marczyk, DeMatteo, and Festinger, 2005:17). The qualitative approach to analysis concerns the subjective evaluation of views, beliefs, and behaviours. Study in such a situation is a result of observations and experiences of the researcher. This method is used to study findings in a non-quantitative context or in a manner that is not subject to a rigorous empirical analysis. The methods of focus group interviews, projective techniques, and in-depth interviews are generally used in this context (Kothari, 2004:5). Babbie and Mouton (2005:108) found that, ultimately, all fieldwork culminates in the analysis and interpretation of some set of data, be it quantitative survey data, experimental recordings, historical and literary texts, qualitative transcripts, or discursive data. My analysis included recordings conducted with the use of different tools, including Google Meet, Zoom, voice notes, and face-to-face recordings. The recordings had to be transcribed. The analysis also focused on collecting notes from the participants in the “personalised” walking trail. Secondary data, gleaned from desktop research, were obtained to complement the primary data. Qualitative research is described or necessitated by the content identification of the elements that are included in the research. My qualitative research design or framework included interview questions consistent with Martin Seligman's PERMA model as related to an individual's well-being. The semi-structured interviews centred on the

participants' emotional well-being, involvement, relationships, meaning and intent, and accomplishments. To get a sense of the participants' well-being, various instruments and methods were used in order to record their perceptions and views. Observation participation and virtual observation created an opportunity to explore and expand my research. Semi-structured interviews were conducted either face-to-face or via a WhatsApp call, Google Meet, or Zoom. An interview guide was also sent to participants who were uncomfortable with face-to-face interaction. These included interview questions. Participants would respond by sending answers via WhatsApp, Telegram, email, or voice notes. Questions were asked around the way in which walking contributed to their well-being during COVID, and why they wanted to follow a personalised COVID walk.

4.2.3 Ethnographic design

The primary data were based on the collection of new information. The term ethnography belongs to the discipline of anthropology. Ethnography provides the descriptive data on which cultural anthropology is based. It involves the observation of a human group's way of life; or, viewed as a process, ethnography is a science of cultural definition (Wolcott, 1975:112). Ethnography is identified as cultural-anthropological information generated from observational data of behaviour in a specific society. The ethnographer's role is to develop report on, and evaluate these discoveries (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:279). Ethnographic interviewing entails two similar but distinct methodologies: connection building and knowledge retrieval. Interaction allows interviewees to discuss their culture. The creation of relationship is aided by the interpretation of information (Spradley, 1979:44). Ethnography also depends on observations of experiences and interviews with participants in a natural situation (Nurani, 2008:442). Mouton and Marais (1988:121) categorise ethnographic design as a study in which new data were obtained, while Nurani (2008:441) categorises it as an observation-taking place in a natural environment. Ethnographic and longitudinal researches are interlinked. These are unique to qualitative research and the collection of primary data. My longitudinal studies were structured to allow for findings over a long period of time. It was conducted over a period of a few months, starting in March 2020. The interview schedule and guideline give evidence of the timeframe (see Appendix 2 and 3). The personalised COVID walk acted as a stress reliever and a recreational activity that benefited not only the mind but also the soul and body. The WhatsApp group was created in order to visually observe first-hand information on the participants' involvement. Some participants were too reluctant to engage with others, even though it was better to walk in an open space. They felt at ease walking alone and tracking their

steps and kilometres. Interviews were conducted in person or by means of a social media network.

4.2.4 Autoethnographic design

Researchers may use a more qualitative storytelling approach, such as memoirs, empirical facts in “scholarly personal narratives” (Nash, 2004), or autoethnography (Reed-Danahay, 2021), the latter which is more methodological and descriptive. Chang (2013) describes this technique as an increasing interest in self-narratives in autoethnographic methodology. Autoethnography is an intensely felt endeavour. It is intimate, since it is built on the life observations of the researchers themselves. It is also an extremely social procedure. Autoethnographers are an important cornerstone of successful practice, and they interact with different socio-cultural contexts. They also change their sociocultural characteristics in order to participate in real-life situations. As a result, autoethnographies display each author’s personal, professional, relational, and socio-cultural identities in public. According to Gornick (2001:89), self-narrative writing is becoming more popular: Three decades ago, those who believed they had a story to share sat down to compose a narrative. The use of autoethnography as a research tool is becoming more common across a wide range of academic areas, including anthropology, communication, education, humanities, leadership, management, nursing, religious studies, social work, sociology, performing arts, and many other disciplines. Since the term “autoethnography” was originally coined by anthropologist Hayano in 1979, the field has grown in various ways due to the method’s increasing popularity. Because of the increasing range of autoethnographic methods, it is risky to reduce the method to a collection of simple criteria. Autoethnographers use their personal experiences as primary source material (data) for social research. They rely on autobiographical material such as memories, mementos, personal documents, official records, images, interviews with others, and ongoing self-reflective and self-observational memoranda (Chang, 2013:108). For the sake of this work, the autoethnographer will concentrate on personal walking experiences.

There is a synergy between autoethnographic and longitudinal research. The autoethnographic fieldwork is also demonstrated through pictures of the different routes that were explored within the Cape Winelands area. Routes were explored within the five districts of the area, and I refer to my “personalised” route as the “Stedra-Witbrel” pilgrimage.

4.3 Research aim and objectives

Research objectives outline briefly that which the research is trying to accomplish. In Chapter 1, clear guidelines were communicated and discussed as to how the research objectives were achieved. By way of recapitulation, the aim of the study was to explore perceptions and experiences amongst participants walking a “personalised” COVID trail and how “pilgrimage walking” contributed to their “quality of life.”

The underlying objectives were as follows.

- To explore the impact of pilgrimage walking on spiritual well-being;
- To investigate participants’ perceptions of pilgrimage walking;
- To explore the ways in which pilgrimage walking contributed to or improved quality of life when participants walked a “personalised” trail.

4.4 Research methods

Research methods can be understood as all techniques used to perform research (Kothari, 2004:7), while each method of research is intended to investigate specific topics. These research methods can be combined with experimental and contextual qualitative studies (Williams, 2007:65-67). The researcher gathers primary data first-hand, mainly through research methods such as surveys, interviews, or “participant observation” (Dane, 1990:131).

4.4.1 Methods of data collection

The primary method of ethnographic and autoethnographic observation has always been participant observation. As a participant observer, the researcher may attempt to participate in the group’s everyday activities (Dane, 1990:92-96). The researcher studies a specific feature of human behaviour with as much objectivity as possible and records the data in the observational research procedure. This research approach may be seen as an alternative to other qualitative research methods. The researcher uses the observational research method to capture events as they occur. This approach, which incorporates an open-ended tool or open-ended elements, is used to collect data from respondents who are representative of a population. In the social sciences, one method of obtaining data is by gathering interview responses (Williams, 2007:67). In the present study, observations were recorded through field notes, screenshots of participants’ posts and comments, and saving external webpages that the participants shared or linked to in their respective Facebook pages (cf. Koteyko and Hunt,

2016:63). The traditional and conventional way or method of collecting data under normal circumstances would have been to walk a specific pilgrimage, introduce yourself to participants/ pilgrims, and explain what the study entails in order to obtain the person's consent. This would have been followed by a semi-structured interview with the person(s) or pilgrim(s) to collect data. The COVID pandemic presented obstacles to this but, at the same time, created opportunities for finding new perspectives. I had to become creative to investigate the core purpose or idea of the study. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were complemented with digital tools or methods. Different digital methods were used to collect data. These, as indicated, included WhatsApp, WhatsApp calls, voice notes, Telegram, Google meet/ Zoom, and e-mails.

WhatsApp offers text and audio messaging, free phone calls, the exchange of images and videos, and the sharing of restricted types of documents. It has developed to be a top-of-mind brand in the instant messaging industry. Many people immediately think of WhatsApp but not of other messenger apps. This is due to user-generated word-of-mouth promotion. WhatsApp further includes instant messaging, WhatsApp calls, and voice notes. Most of the participants were comfortable using this tool. Telegram was also used. It is a popular messaging application developed on an open-source platform. In addition to being free of charge, it provides an ad-free experience with a clean and fast design (Sutikno *et al.*, 2016:909-910). Google Meet and Zoom are more or less similar online application platforms used for meetings. Their high use strength demonstrates they are simple to use. The ease of use of online communications continues to increase. The most important factor for usability, particularly in digital services, is ease of use (Purwanto and Tannady, 2020:2834-2835). E-mails were used as a data collection tool. The purpose of an e-mail is to serve as a tool for correspondence with a participant, while searching for key information as part of preparation for a specific subject. Responses are evoked via email (Cook, 2008:198-207).

4.4.2 Ethical considerations

In order to follow the process of collecting data from the participants, I had to submit an application for ethical clearance. Approval was granted for the research project by the Senate Research Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at the University of the Western Cape. Principles of transparency, respect for participants, informed consent, and voluntary participation of participants, as well as confidentiality and privacy of participants guided my research project (see Appendix 4).

Fully informed consent of prospective participants was obtained prior to interviews and observations. Participants have been told that they had the right to withdraw at any time. The information obtained from the participants was confidential and remained undisclosed. It was harmless to the participants and would not have been of any benefit or detriment to anyone in this research. Participation was voluntary and free, and no exchange of any sort of payment was exchanged. The participants' right to privacy was respected. Sensitivity to disparities in culture, disability, ethnicity, sex, religion, and sexual orientation was valued.

Participants were invited to participate in the study. Moving about freely in 2020 was difficult during the lockdown and ensuing imposed restrictions. I enlisted the help of social media to find participants. I would announce on my WhatsApp status that a pilgrimage walk or personalised trail would begin on a specific date and that anyone interested should contact me for more details. I would periodically update my status prior to the commencement of the personalised trail or pilgrimage walk until I had a large enough number or sample size to begin the activity. When contacted by interested participants, I would send the guidelines via WhatsApp, an instant messaging application, or a voicenote, which is a functionality of the WhatsApp application. As the months passed and restrictions were lifted, the personalised trail and pilgrimage walking became a daily occurrence. In fact, participants would ask for a continuation and also invite newcomers to the personalised COVID walk. On the personalised COVID pilgrimage trail, I would conduct interviews to get a sense of participants' perception about it. The importance and purpose of the study were communicated and explained to the participants. Participants were informed to take time to read the information carefully and discuss it with others if they wished to do so. If they were unclear on anything, they were informed that I would at any time be happy to answer any questions they might have concerning the interviews.

Participation in this research was voluntary, which meant that the participant had the right to withdraw at any point. He/ she had the right to privacy, including the right to refuse to participate in research. The participant was told that he/ she had the right to withdraw at any time without repercussions of any sort. The participant was entitled to anonymity and confidentiality. The researcher informed the participant that she/ he was entitled to full disclosure of the study (informed consent). The participant was told that she/ he had the right not to be harmed in any way whatsoever (physically, psychologically, or emotionally).

The study did not predict any risks. No costs were involved to the participant for partaking in it. The consent form was signed by the participant and this was required before I proceeded with the interview. The form with its information sheet can be examined in Appendix 5.

4.4.3 Sampling method or criteria used to select participants or sources

In order to retain the core focus of my sampling method, participants selected were sourced through social media. I promoted the idea and the benefits of a personalised COVID pilgrimage in terms of the concept of a steps challenge, via WhatsApp. I had to be creative around telling potential participants about the advantages of joining a WhatsApp group that I had created for the personalised COVID pilgrimage.

Promoting this event via social media came with its own challenges. I had to wait for potential participants to respond to my notification and, quite a few times, I had to re-communicate the notification. I had to patiently wait for responses. Once I got these, I had to explain what the COVID trail and pilgrimage were about and the criteria for the journey.

4.4.4 Tools, procedures, and materials used to collect data

Data was collected over an extended period of time. This procedure is known as a longitudinal study, which is designed to permit observations of the same phenomenon over an extended period (Babbie, 2001:110). The first COVID pilgrimage started in July 2020 and lasted for seven to 21 days. Eighteen participants took part. The idea was to get people moving/ walking during the lockdown. I had to explain what was expected from them to participants, but that they only had to walk as much as they could. This included participant observation, which meant that I participated in this COVID pilgrimage walk. Every participant had to post the number of steps they walked for the day in the WhatsApp group that had been created for this purpose. This included the kilometres they had walked for the day. For 21 days, every single morning, an inspirational quote was posted in the group in order to motivate walking for the day. Every person's number of steps and kilometres were documented in an Excel spreadsheet, and I could monitor individual progress. This is known as digital or virtual observation. Ethnographies of online communities in chat rooms or role-playing platforms have a longstanding experience. Döring (2003) describes this method as "participant observation with minimal or no other engagement with members." WhatsApp, Telegram, Google Meet, Zoom, and e-mails complemented the traditional way of conducting my ethnographic research, as has been indicated. My observation participation was not only limited to face-to-face situations,

but extended to virtual observation (see Appendix 6), through a digital platform using the methods and tools mentioned above. The online platform created a safe space for participants to interact with the researcher, as some participants did not feel comfortable in a face-to-face interview.

4.4.5 Measurable variables (how, when, and where interviews were conducted)

After the 21 days sessions were arranged for semi-structured interview questions. These were communicated and conducted via email, voice notes, WhatsApp, Zoom, and Google meet. The first pilgrims completed their personalised COVID trail successfully in 21 days. The group consisted of 18 participants.

A second, third, fourth, and fifth group walked respectively from November 2020 to December 2020, December 2020 to January 2021, January 2021 to February 2021, and February 2021 to March 2021. The same protocol and procedure were followed. The November 2020 to December 2020 pilgrimage consisted of nine participants, the December 2020 to January 2021 pilgrimage of 14, the January 2021 to February 2021 pilgrimage of 17, and the February 2021 to March 2021 pilgrimage of 23 (see Appendix 7).

4.4.6 Method of analysis (how data was analysed and processed)

Analysis involves “breaking up” the data into manageable themes, patterns, trends, and relationships. The aim of analysis is to understand the various constitutive elements of one’s data through an inspection of the relationships between concepts, constructs, or variables, and to see whether patterns or trends that can be identified or isolated or in order to establish themes in the data (Babbie and Mouton, 2005:108). In my study, I used qualitative content and narrative analysis as my tools. The qualitative content review method is discussed by Elo and Kyngäs (2008:107) as one that enables the researcher to put conceptual problems to the test in order to elucidate the results. Content analysis is a research technique that identifies the influence of specific terms, topics, or ideas in qualitative data. Researchers may use content analysis to measure and evaluate the impact, definitions, and correlations of specific words, patterns, or ideas. Cole (1988) defines content analysis as a method for analysing written, verbal, or visual communication messages, and Krippendorff (1980) defines it as a research method for replicating and validating insights from data in terms of their scope. The method’s goal is to provide information, new ideas, a representation of reality, and a realistic action plan. Narrative analysis is a method widely used in ethnographic research (Atkinson *et al.*, 2000:30)

and is a process used to analyse content from various sources such as respondent interviews, field observations, surveys, or questionnaires. It is concerned with the field of perception, in which participants explain how they as individuals view different events (Bamberg, 2012:3). There is a correlation between content analysis and narrative analysis: they complement each other.

The well-being framework illustrates various aspects or contains various concepts of well-being. The interview questions were designed to be asked in the order specified by well-being criteria. The questions were created so as to answer the goals of my research. The questions were quantifiable, descriptive, and coherent. While the primary aim was to examine perceptions of participants walking a personalised COVID trail and how pilgrimage walking relates to their quality of life, sub-questions were designed to determine participants' perceptions of well-being. Sub-questions included the following: How has walking contributed to your well-being during COVID? How did you find the WhatsApp group interaction? During COVID, did walking and being part of a group give you a sense of belonging? If so, please explain how and why. What was the point of joining this personalised pilgrimage/ steps challenge group? In addition, how would you explain completing your steps and kilometres goals?

As indicated, this was a longitudinal study, and data was collected over a few months, with pilgrimage walking occurring at 21-day intervals. Over the duration of 21 days, the number of steps and kilometres taken were documented, once more. I designed an interview template ahead of time to ensure continuity and save resources. My data were organised in a database with collection dates. My data analysis was divided into various themes and trends. Connections were developed using various methods, including pivot tables in Excel. Excel developed a platform for me to filter my data based on various variables.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter concentrated on the research design and methods that served as its foundation. The chapter was an in-depth discussion about the methodological design, its context, and its importance to this project, and its general features. It outlined the methodological framework that guided my research. As discussed, this study is located within a well-being framework and is concerned with Seligman's theory of well-being. It includes five components such as positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and purpose as well as accomplishment. Mixed methods guided this research, and both qualitative and quantitative research was employed.

This chapter further outlined the qualitative procedures for the selection of the participants, the methods of data collection, as well as the processes followed in the thematic analysis of the data.

The subsequent chapter builds on the theoretical argument presented in this one by providing qualitative data collected in terms of using the suggested data design and data collection techniques.



Chapter 5

Walking a personalised COVID pilgrimage trail: A case study

5.1 Introduction

Walking pilgrimages are not new phenomena; they have been practised for many years. The practice of pilgrimage is a component of the worldwide community. On a worldwide scale, pilgrimage walking is related with spiritual well-being and spiritual development, as demonstrated in Chapter 3. Although pilgrimage has long since been a feature of many religious institutions, pilgrimage walking is a relatively new concept in South Africa, as shown in Chapter 4. The concept of pilgrimage walking is gaining popularity, and pathways are investigated by various scholars reflecting on joining the international pilgrimage culture, again as intimated by the preceding chapters. This chapter displays the COVID personalised pilgrimage path as a new trail and endeavour in order to contribute to an understanding of the international pilgrimage culture and community. The chapter contains information in the form of a walking journal/ notes, observations, and narratives about pilgrimage walking on a personalised COVID-trail. The data have been analysed, presented, and explained in terms of a case study in order to show the effect of pilgrimage walking on participants and how it enhances their quality of life. A thematic journey is used to present the case study. This chapter's journey is shaped by the analysis. The participants in the interviews viewed a personalised pilgrimage as a journey of discovery. Thematic analysis is the result of the path that my studies took. Based on empirical investigation, the case study engenders new data. Walking finds itself in a discursive position within my study.

The chapter discusses participants' views on the effect of walking on overall well-being. The themes express an interpretation of the interviewees' perception of walking. The ensuing discussion gives a sense of participants' overall well-being, the effect of walking on their soul and spirit, and the connection between walking and self-discipline. It expands to include the influence of walking on interviewees' physical and mental health, especially during COVID-19. Beginning with the study's rationale, the participants' impressions of walking will now be discussed.

5.2 Background information

The initial three weeks of lockdown in South Africa, dating back from 26 March to 30 April 2020, where I could not freely move around, was traumatising for me as a walker, hiker, and

nature lover. I am a free-spirited human being and enjoy simple things. Collins-Kreiner (2010) discusses spiritual walking as an instrument for fostering communities of passion. The simplicity and humble act of walking outdoors without technological influences or disturbances nurture the capacity to care for others. This deed of walking without technological influences selflessness expands to the walker and respect for the environment. Not being able to walk in nature and do a bit of urban walking were daunting, not only on my body, but also on my soul. I tried Youtube walking, walking in my lounge, walking up and down the stairs of my house, and I was still left with a sense of deprivation. My soul feeds off open spaces, clean air, and silence. “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” (cf. Gros, 2014). After three weeks I became a bit daring, walking around the house in order to feed my body and soul, but still it was not sufficient. The confined space and limited walking left me with a feeling of distress. Watching and reading the news of COVID-19 infections and deaths fuelled this distress. My spirit felt insecure, and my body retaliated. My sleeping pattern changed. I would be awake until two in the morning, fall asleep, and then sleep until midday. My digestive system became irregular, and on many days I would go without relief, feeling bloated. I experienced headaches, my body was in shock, and it felt weak and unresponsive.

Restrictions were changed from level five to level four, dating back to 1 May 2020, which meant that one could walk from 6 am to 9 am every day. I had to prepare my body to wake up earlier so as not to miss the opportunity to walk. Never was I as excited to be able to walk, and getting up earlier became my new norm. The ritual became effortless. The five weeks of lockdown and the confined space of exercising were forgotten. My soul was happy and my body reacted positively, but I am a nature lover and the novelty of being able to walk in a different natural space, while being 5 km, was still non-existent. Working remotely made walking within restricted times challenging, as I had deadlines to meet. I needed more: my soul, spirit, and body needed more in order for them to be happy and well. Walking is the product of a distinct part of the soul. My well-being was driven by my walking, hiking, and physical exercises. Then the announcement came that we were allowed to hike again, and I was elated. I could walk in the mountains, feel the sun on my skin, talk to my Creator, listen to the peacefulness of nature, and feel free.

So why do I walk or hike? Yes, I do this for fitness, but more so for the conversation with my Creator and myself. What do these mean? Many times one needs to do introspection, question

one's purpose and, sometimes, one finds it challenging to do it by oneself within a confined space. Walking and hiking became tools to address challenges, pain, good news, insecurities, and unresolved demands. I walk to feed my body and soul. I walk to maintain my sanity. I walk because it gives me a sense of freedom, serenity, and solitude. I walk because it is good for my body. I walk for conversation with my Heavenly Father. I walk to pray. I am a walker.

5.3 The demographic figures of the personalised walking community

The demographics of the participants were specific and limited to age, gender, and location. The section to follow includes the gender, age, and walking locations of the various participants.

5.3.1 Gender of participants

The number of participants is indicated by (n), which is the total number of participants represented in terms of frequency. The frequency distribution of pilgrims who participated can be represented as the (N) of Pilgrims (P) = 16(MP) + 36(FP).

MP = Male Participants

FP = Female Participants

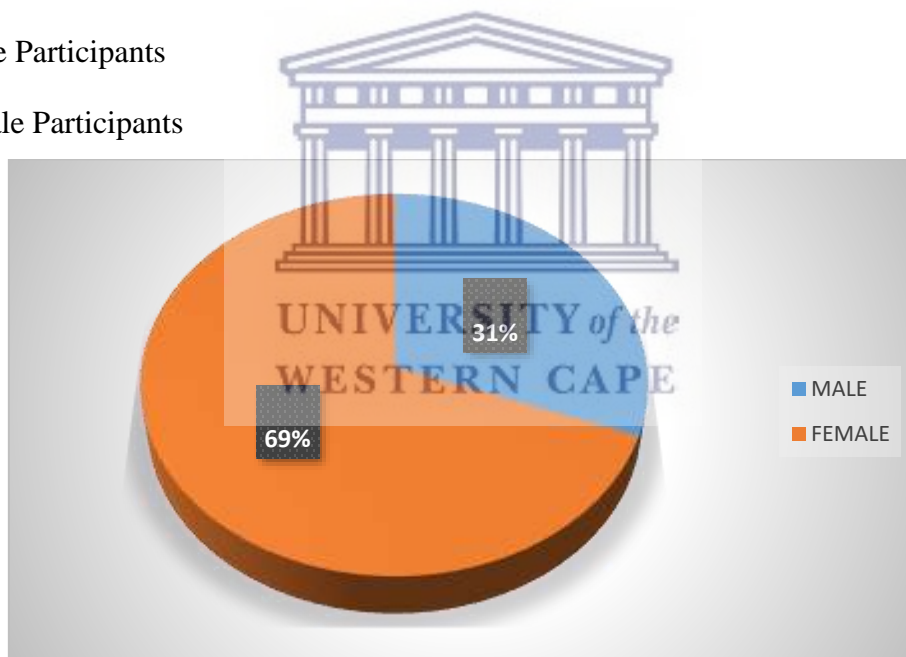


Figure 5.1: Gender distribution of participants

The frequency of the participants that formed part of the study was 52. The ratio of participants in terms of percentages is interpreted as 69% female and 31% male.

5.3.2 Participants by age

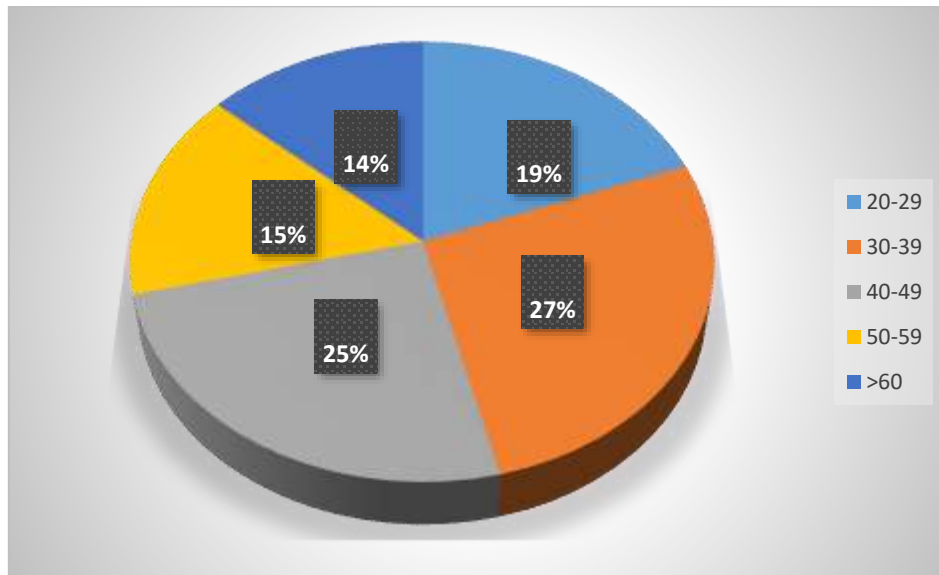


Figure 5.2: Age categories of participants

The frequency distribution of pilgrims who participated in the research can be described as Frequency (F) = 10*20-29, 14*30-39, 13*40-49, 8*50-59, 7*<60. As indicated by Figure 5.2, the frequency in terms of percentages were as follows: 19% of participants were in the age group 20 – 29, 27% in the age group 30-39, 25% in the age group 40 – 49, 15% in the age group 50 – 59, and 14% were 60 years of age and older.

5.3.3 Walking location of participants

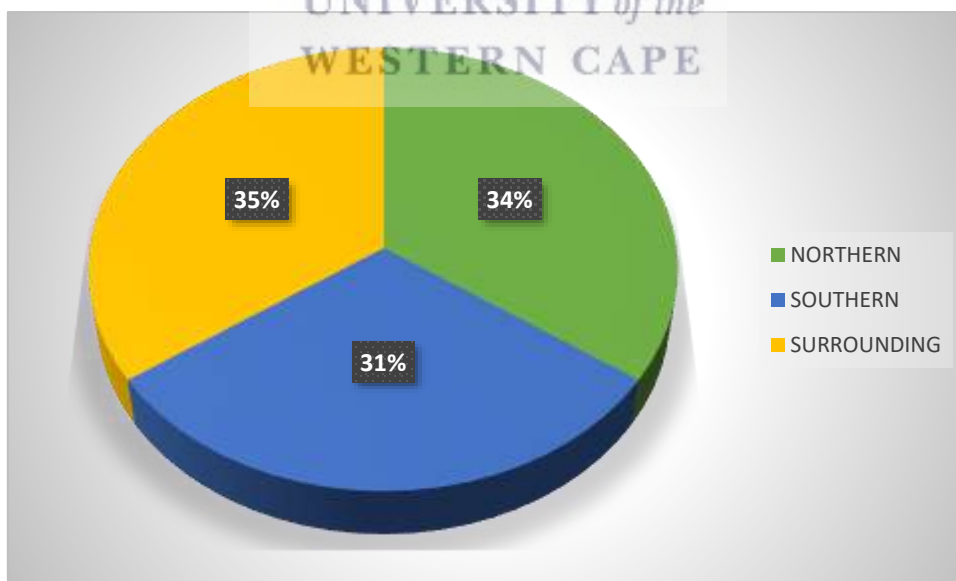


Figure 5.3: Walking location of participants

The frequency distribution of participants' walking location was confined to three areas: the Northern Suburbs, Southern Suburbs and surrounding areas of Cape Town. The frequency distribution of the participants' location where individuals walked their personalised pilgrimage, whether it was in the area or outside of it, was documented as follows: Frequency calculated in terms of Cape Town and surrounded areas (F) = 18*Northern Suburbs, 16*Southern Suburbs, and 18*Surrounding Areas. As indicated by Figure 5.3, the frequency in percentages was as follows: 34% of participants walked in the Northern Suburbs, 31% in the Southern Suburbs, and 35% in the surrounding areas of Cape Town.

The following section will deal with the participants' perspectives on walking a personalised path. Every participant had a unique personalised experience, which will be demonstrated or expressed in the discussion to follow. The role of the personalised experience is crucial for the participant's overall well-being.

5.4 Step towards well-being

The role of walking in well-being was given new meaning by the participants. Individuals found a correlation between mental and physical well-being. As a result of this connection, a need emerged to pursue a better lifestyle to sustain a good mental and physical health (cf. Holley *et al.*, 2011). The attributes identified by the participants and also identified by Holley *et al.* concluded that physical well-being, mental well-being, clears the mind, keeps the participant sane and contributes to the emotional well-being of the participant. Physical well-being was presented through walking by the different participants as a means in playing a pivotal role in well-being. Participants believed that walking at face value seemed insignificant and small. Yet, when one's freedom of movement is taken away drastically, you come to realise how important moving around on foot is. Participants felt that walking does not only transfer physical and emotional confidence but it plays an important role in physical and emotional healing which contributes to overall well-being. FP1 (age 50-59), MP17 (age 40-49) FP24 (age 20-29), FP29 (age 30-39) and MP37 viewed walking as not only beneficial for the mind but also for the body as it addresses the physical aspect of well-being. Participants all concurred that they benefitted physically from walking because it released the tensions and pressures caused by the pandemic and work. The opportunity to walk and do exercise during lockdown led to physical and emotional healing:

During COVID-19, with all the restrictions and regulations imposed on society, the mere fact that you could move through walking played an important role in my mental and physical well-being (FP1).

[P]hysical well-being and the general realisation of the benefits of walking in general and the integral part it could have in physical and emotional healing (MP17).

Not only is it beneficial for your mind but beneficial for your body (FP24).

[P]hysically I have benefitted and releasing all the tension or pressure of the pandemic and work has been beneficial for my well-being (FP29).

Physical well-being and the general realisation of the benefits of walking in general and the integral part it could have in physical and emotional healing. It improves your mood instantly (MP37).

Participants held that an equilibrium existed between bodily, mental, and emotional well-being. Walking, accordingly, created emotional stability and emotional healing. Participants slept better after walking, which contributed to their overall mental and physical well-being. Walking helped with their mental well-being during COVID because being confined to a space during the lockdowns was mentally challenging. Walking cleared participants MP17, FP24 (age 20-29), FP29 (age 30-39), and FP37's mind and served as an intervention tool towards addressing isolation due to COVID restrictions. Walking created the opportunity to break away from the tension and pressures of working remotely.

[Walking] contributed greatly towards general increase of emotional confidence. [It] helps you sleep better, and boosts your overall [well-being] (MP17).

You feel so much better after walking as well. It has helped my mental state, especially because of COVID because it is difficult to be in a confined space during this pandemic, so yeah (FP24).

[Walking] helps me clear my mind when working from home and being isolated in one place gets too overwhelming. It allowed me to break away and somehow still remain sane (FP29).

Being in isolation and being confined in an isolated space for a considerable amount of time was a big contributor towards anxiety, emotional stress and fear (MP37).

These participants shared the same sentiments about the value of walking when it came to their emotions. Their responses testified that walking was not merely an activity but a method of therapy. Participants demonstrated that walking alleviated emotional stress, enhanced emotional confidence, and fostered emotional healing. Participants found well-being to be

related to inner peace. When the participant walked, it formed the essence of her quality of life. *“I am at peace when I walk. My inner peace contributes to my overall well-being.”* Walking created calmness and soothed the soul.

5.5 A happy place

Walking for the purposes of my research places this study in the position of a discursive language. But what does this mean, exactly? Walking is much more than the act of putting one foot in front of the other (cf. Gros, 2014). Participants associated walking with some type of joy or enjoyment in order to experience a happy place. The word “joy” or “enjoyment” appeared 18 times in the thematic analysis of the effect of walking on the participant. Participant MP2,² (age 45-49), found satisfaction in walking, whereas FP13 (age 60-65), felt like skipping and jumping with joy when she walked. When MP2 and FP13 were walking in open spaces it had a calming effect on their lives, filling them with joy and thankfulness.

The initial purpose was to join a group of people who found joy in walking, discovering new things, sights and sounds, being able to experience the effects of nature, and to improve on the goals we set for ourselves (MP2).

I also walk when I need wide open spaces where I can shout out my happiness, skip and jump for joy, sharing myself with nature without fear of judgement or condemnation for behaviour that may be deemed crazy. I can lose my burdens and reconnect to what is most precious: a peaceful life filled with joy and gratitude (FP13).

It is clear that MP2 and FP13 found similar joy in walking. Walking created joy for MP2 and FP13 while they were on a quest of discovering new things, sights, and sounds. Walking in open spaces allows the individual to be pleased and happy. “Joyful” and “enjoyable” are characteristics associated with a “happy” place. FP10 (age 30-39), stated that being outside in nature had a relaxing impact and being stripped of bad ideas and sensations, and that walking added value to her happy place. Walking made the soul, spirit, and body of FP11 (aged 50-59), joyful. Walking’s simplicity fostered a sense of enjoyment in this participant. Walking in nature represented her perception of ultimate happiness. Walking is one of the ventures that did not

² When reference is made the first time to a participant in this chapter, e.g. MP2 and FP13, age category is mentioned as complementary information. In all further references to this particular participant only the acronym is provided.

require jogging or weights, so MP19 (age 40-49), enjoyed it. In the respective words of all three of these participants:

The outdoors is an instant mood booster as it clears my head of any negative thoughts and feelings and the calming effects can only be offered by nature (FP10).

My soul was happy, my body reacted positively but I am a nature lover and the novelty of being able to walk and being confined to 5km worn off. Working remote, made walking with the restricted times challenging as I had deadlines and the restricted times did not always suit my routine. I needed more, my soul, spirit and body needed more to be happy. I am a free spirited human being and enjoy simple things in life. Walking and hiking forms part of that simplistic union. Not being able to walk in nature and do a bit of urban walking was daunting not only on my physique but also on my soul (FP11).

I do not like jogging or pushing weights, I enjoy walking (MP19).

FP10, FP11, and MP19 clearly all agreed on the importance of walking. Their happy place was associated with so much more than walking and influenced their attitude on life. One of the associations they made is how they managed and balanced their stress levels. Because of their managed stress levels, their happiness became clear. A managed and balanced stress level led to a happy existence and improved the participants' quality of life. Walking enabled them to live a happy life because of the reduction in anxiety and stress levels. Walking in nature increased participants' positive emotions and contributed to their happiness. Participants FP7 (age, 20-29), MP16 (age, 50-59), FP23 (age, 40-49), MP37 (age, 40-49), and FP39 (age, 50-59) all shared similar views: that walking or participating in the steps challenge during COVID-19 restrictions and lockdown put a positive spin on things, which contributed to their happiness. (More details about the steps challenge will be given later in the chapter.) They expressed this as follows in their own respective ways:

As a result, I have found that my stress levels are much more controlled and balanced. I am happier and much more pleasant to be around. I have a much more positive outlook on life. I do believe that walking has majorly contributed to this (FP7).

Walking no doubt had a positive effect on my overall well-being during lockdown. During a time when we were all suffering from cabin fever, walking (even though it was only for a few hours per day) offered the opportunity to escape the daily routine and get some necessary exercise (MP16).

Yes it did. Cos it helped to know that everyone was facing the challenges that COVID brought but still attempted to complete the challenges. COVID had a negative impact on everyone however the challenges put a positive spin on things (FP23).

A positive mindset and attitude is therefore a big, big contributor towards the challenges this pandemic creates on both your physical and emotional well-being. It relieves stress, improves memory, helps you sleep better, and boosts your overall mood and physical well-being. You do not have to be a fitness fanatic to reap the benefits of walking, especially in a time of extreme uncertainty (MP37).

I have been walking for years, keeping physically fit but this challenge was a testimony that I can do anything I put my mind to, nothing is impossible with a positive mindset. I also learnt to never doubt myself. Walking during the pandemic was a relief of mental tension, stress and all the negativity that surrounded us during this pandemic period (FP39).

The participants all confirmed that walking was beneficial because it generated a serene, tranquil, and calming influence on them. Other participants found it to be a stress reliever and a control measure for a balanced life. Walking clearly relieved stress and encouraged a positive outlook and attitude. The participants demonstrated that walking was a contributory factor to an optimistic mentality and well-being. Confidence was generated by a positive outlook. Walking improved participants' mood and memory. It improved overall well-being and improved quality of life. Happiness had an effect on positiveness, which in turn had an effect on general well-being.



5.6 Appeasing the soul

Many characteristics spring to mind when one considers the holistic approach walking. There is a synergy between soothing the soul, feelings, life, mind, and peace, all of which have a bearing on your existence, either actively or passively. Appeasing the soul is a journey to wholeness (cf. Tisdell, 2003). Walking as a mechanism to appease the soul was illustrated by participants FP6 (age 50-59), FP11, FP41 (age 40-49), and FP45 (age 50-59). When respondents had favourable feelings, souls were soothed and joyful. Re-establishing the connection between the fulfilment of participants' soul, spirit, and body provided a relaxing experience for the person as an individual. The participant was negatively affected during the first few weeks of lockdown because he was isolated and denied the ability to move around. Walking was found to be nourishing spiritual and bodily. Walking was described as a soul-soothing motion by the participants:

As walking is good for the soul, physically it strengthens my muscles, and helps to control weight (FP6).

Not being able to walk in nature and do a bit of urban walking was daunting not only on my physique but also on my soul (FP11).

Walking soothes the soul. It calms me after a stressful day (FP41).

Walking uplifts my spirit and is so good for my soul. So I passed a paraplegic on his tricycle this morning and once again I realised how blessed and favoured I am to be able to walk (FP45).

Only when individuals discovered inner harmony with their spirit did they experience landscapes and bird chirping, which reflected on a greater level. FP8 (age 30-39), FP13 and FP30 (age 50-59), spoke about the tranquillity they found while walking as an act of connection. When the person is unburdened as a result of the walking experience, he or she is reintroduced to a calm life. Calmness is also related with peace, as found in responses from the following three participants.

I enjoy listening to people's experiences; I always see a form of peace that comes with walking (FP8).

I can lose my burdens and reconnect to what is most precious: a peaceful life filled with joy and gratitude (FP13).

I think it is about the chemical thing in the brain, I do not have knowledge about it but it gives me some peace, it gives me some calmness in me (FP30).

These participants clearly stated that they took pleasure in the simple things in life, which was healthy for their souls, setting their spirits free, not least since they were not overthinking things and therefore limited the overcomplication of things. When FP11 and FP13 were unburdened as a result of the walking experience, they were steered to a calm life. Responses confirmed the simplicity of these peaceful experiences.

I am a free spirited human being and enjoy simple things in life. Walking and hiking forms part of that simplistic union (FP11).

[She] reconnects to what is most precious: a peaceful life [while walking] (FP13).

FP11 and FP13 confirmed that walking appeased the soul, freed the spirit, and created a peaceful walking environment. FP6 and FP10 ventured the impact of walking on their feelings. They felt good about all elements of themselves. There is a relationship between the soul and

feelings experienced. It was as though the individual was experiencing positive feelings, and the soul was content.

Overall, it just makes me feel good, healthy (FP6).

[Walking] clears my head of any negative thoughts and feelings (FP10).

These respondents agreed that walking appeased the soul. Walking had the impact of transforming the mind and restoring the body, which was soothing to the spirit. FP8 and MP20 (age 20-29), responded to the influence of walking on their minds by saying that it placed them in a positive position of peace.

The reward is inexplicable, it transforms the mind and restores the body (FP8).

[Walking] puts me at ease, it takes my mind away from the various stresses faced each day, it relaxes me in the most exhausting way possible and it knows exactly how to calm me down and how to give me a new perspective (MP20).

If the soul is content, the spirit will be as well. Throughout this data, participants' perspectives on the impact of walking on their spirituality were demonstrated either directly or indirectly.

5.7 The journey, the walk, and the spirit

Walking, the spirit, and spirituality all have a connection. Spiritual walking is a one-of-a-kind experience, as has been expounded in Chapter 3 of the present project. Walking cultivates the spirit and people walk purposefully as an act of encountering spirituality (cf. Power, 2015). The impact of walking on the spirit and spirituality was upheld by participants FP4 (age 40-49) and FP11 held it to be an activity that not only uplifted their spirit but also their body and emotions. For these two participants, a direct correlation existed between their bodily, emotional, and spiritual well-being. FP4 and FP11's spirits were uplifted as they walked. The participants believed that there was a link between a free-spirited individual and basic pleasures in life. They believed that these two elements complement each other. Walking appeared to expand the boundaries and constraints of the simple things in life, thus creating opportunities to nurture the spirit:

It brings out the best in me. It uplifts my spirit, good for my physique and emotions (FP4).

I needed more, my soul, spirit and body needed more to be happy. I am a free spirited human being and enjoy simple things in life. Walking and hiking forms part of that simplistic union (FP11).

It is evident that, as FP4 and FP11 found peace, their spirituality deepened and flourished. FP8, FP10, FP13, and FP41 expressed a sense of cultivation in their spirituality in a discussion with their Maker. Their experience was a renewal and a connection with their spiritual path. Walking was discovered by the participants to be a spiritual pilgrimage. The spiritual journey is much more than a walk to wholeness; it is a voyage of renewal, a spiritual journey of self-discovery. The participants believed that walking kept their spirituality in shape:

[S]pirituality allows one to be in a tranquil and quiet surrounding just speaking to your maker. I always see a form of peace that comes with walking, an expression on their faces that is unexplainable but relatable (FP8).

[Walking] is also a spiritual and rejuvenating experience for me (FP10).

For me walking is a spiritual journey of renewal and confirmation of who I am in this world (FP13).

Walking keeps me mentally, spiritually and physically fit (FP41).

It is clear that participants perceived a link between how they viewed walking and how it related to or influenced their spirituality. It is also clear that participants viewed their spiritual growth as a journey.

5.8 A walk suited to the walker

The walker finds the path that best meets his or her needs. Every component of the walk is part of a personalised journey, whether it is a stroll with one's dog, a walk to clear one's mind, a walk to control comorbidities, or a walk to balance one's mental and physical health. A walk does not centre on a best practice approach, or a one-size fits all approach, but rather involves a customised journey to discovery that serves some need. Walking is perceived as a journey aimed at solving a wide range of challenges. The journey of walking was viewed by participants to be a process aimed at enhancing health; a journey to build and strengthen their immune system and body, and fortify their bodies against COVID, as well as a journey of cognitive stimulation (MP2, FP6 and FP30). Participants believed that the personal pursuit of a walking journey was to improve their overall health, build their immune system, strengthen their bodies, and protect it against COVID-19. The personal journey provided cognitive stimulation while relaxing their minds. They viewed walking as a quest in which they found walking to be mentally stimulating.

[There are] like-minded individuals who walk to improve their overall health, build up their immune systems and strengthen their bodies. This provides protection against COVID-19, once combined with a healthy diet and supplements to further strengthen your immune system (MP2).

[Walking] offers a good mental stimulator and relaxes the mind, which enables me to deal with daily challenges. Especially walking in nature, it is a personal journey (FP6).

So walking was sort of my outlet clearing my mind (FP30).

Based on these views, the walking venture improved health and immune systems and provided new options of choice and experience. The path of tranquillity brings about rejuvenation, motivation, desires, and opportunities for development. FP6 described walking as a journey to experience silence within herself, while FP14 (age, 20-29) described her walk as a time to systematically pause in order for her thoughts to become still.

Walking allows me to find that silence within myself (FP6).

I walk because for those few minutes, my mind becomes still: slowly gradually, beautifully still.

I walk because my eyes are then opened to all I see, in the stillness. It is not about the destination, it is about the journey (FP14).

For the purpose of this discussion, participants walked to a specific location. Completing their journey will be the participant's achievement, renewal, interaction, and the motivation will be the encouragement for their journey. Each one of these attributes complements the others. The journey centres on interaction for the participant. The inspiration and achievement of other participants/ walkers are the personal journey. Every participant had a reason for pursuing a journey (FP22 age 40-49, FP24, FP13, and FP39). The journey entailed not only walking, but also coping with transitions, which had an impact on the physical and mental health of participants. The unique approach of individual transformation focused on achieving physical body weight while also preserving emotional well-being. The personalised journey of participants FP22, FP24, FP13, FP39, FP45, and FP33 (age 40-49), comprised a spiritual journey of rejuvenation and confirmation which led to the discovery of the inner self. The personalised journey of the participants was a journey of sharing: sharing individual achievements, commitments, dedication, and sacrifice with other participants. The personalised journey of participants also included personal achievement, journey of interaction, and uncovering their true self despite the fact that the engagement with some of the participants was thinly disseminated:

Even though the interaction were at a minimal, it created a platform for us to do the things we love (walking/hiking) together as a group (but individually) and still be motivated by whatever amount of steps/kilometres the other group members achieved and motivates you to either achieve the same amount or better it (FP22).

So me, personally, where I am at this point in my life. I am in a process of transitioning, not only transitioning, my physical and mental state. Walking so actually helped me achieve my physical body weight but not only my physical but my mental well-being state as well (FP24).

For me walking is a spiritual journey of renewal and confirmation of who I am in this world (FP13).

Yes I felt part of a team and the sharing of each individual's accomplishments, reflected commitment, dedication and sacrifice (FP39).

It defines the person that I am. Every day my kms/steps are a personal achievement (FP45).

Personally I could feel there could be more interaction (FP33).

Although participants desired greater levels of engagement, it was clear that the way in which they connected with one another and the anticipation of their walking adventure stemmed from their desire for a specific goal. This outcome resulted from a specific purpose was based on the reflection they conducted during their journey, which resulted in numerous experiences. The experience of the journey, rather than the eventual destination, determines the participants' perspective of the walk. During the walk, individuals learned new things about themselves while rediscovering themselves. As illustrated by the above-mentioned comments, their achievements were well beyond their abilities. A personalised walking journey is a journey of self-discovery.

5.9 A sense of “self” reconnect with the self

Around the notion of the walking experience becoming a walking discovery, participants' perspectives on finding the self were as follows: Participants FP1, FP9 (age 40-49), FP14 and MP19 described the value of walking as an enlightenment, an experience of feeling good, a venture to overcome mini-obstacles, and an escape from all the worries that plagued them. The act of walking was described as a reconnection with the inner self as well as anything else learned on the walk, reinforcing the idea of walking as a tool that provided them with an opportunity to engage in meaningful conversation. It helped participants to understand that they were not alone. Participants' experiences suggested that inner personal features lead to an individualised perception of the inner self as well as a sense of belonging, implying a spiritual

component (cf. Richardson Gibson & Parker, 2003). Walking, according to participants FP30, FP32 (age 30-39), FP33, FP36 (age, 30-39) and FP44 (age 20-29), claimed that walking led to a personal sense of self which surfaced because it individually meant much to them. It made them feel that they were able to do anything, even though it was at times challenging. The positive outcome of walking made them more goal-oriented. The cross that was discovered on the beach, while walking reminded them that they were not alone. The sensation of inner self or self-discovery when walking was related to objectives, targets, community, and the individual. Participation in a group allowed participants (MP2 and FP6) to find satisfaction in discovering new things, sights, and sounds, which evolved into the improvement of the person and they realised that it was beneficial for their skin. MP2 and FP6 claimed their discoveries as follows:

[Walking and] discovering new things, sights and sounds, being able to experience the effects of nature (MP2).

I have discovered it is good for my skin (FP6).

There was a sense of community that allowed respondents to identify their individualism through connecting with themselves and setting goals and targets. Participants believed that these goals and aims were means of experiencing enlightenment, and that the goals increased their sense of self. Goals were set for themselves, and these were achieved. It gave the participants confidence that they were able and competent to perform it. Participants pushed and challenged themselves to develop a stronger sense of identity in order to be proud of themselves (FP28, age 40-49; FP33 and FP39). They pushed themselves to complete the challenge, which meant that they pressed themselves beyond their comfort zone. Participants would walk longer than usual. They would push their abilities beyond what they were comfortable with.

Do push myself, to challenge myself and to improve every day a little more (FP28).

Achieving my steps is a challenge for me. I did not enjoy walking as much as I should so I push myself; it is a challenge (FP33).

I pushed myself beyond what I thought I was capable of. Being physically during the pandemic, I truly say improved my health, assisted with blood circulation and also tensed muscles (FP39).

This response evidences that participants discovered the effect of walking on their well-being. They realised that walking was good for their overall health and overall well-being once they

were in tune with their senses (FP1, FP6, and FP11). Participants agreed that walking was excellent for the skin and made it feel wonderful. Walking in the mountains and feeling the sun on their skin gave them a sense of inner peace.

My skin felt better, my health was better, my overall well-being improved (FP1).

I have discovered [walking] is good for my skin (FP6).

I could walk in the mountains, feel the sun on my skin, talk to the Creator, listen to the peacefulness of nature and feel free (FP11).

Participants found themselves to be part of a walking community. The walking community served as a resource in managing their isolation and loneliness, as well as dealing with their confinement in the house during COVID-19. The feeling of self is discovered within oneself. Participants FP7, FP11, FP12, age, 30-39, FP22, FP23, FP32, and FP36 found themselves within a walking community, but also in dialogue with their Creator. The participants learned that they had the ability to push themselves and challenge their limits. When they were part of the walking group, participants felt obligated to walk a significant distance. As encouragement, the walking group encouraged individuals who were isolated and alone to walk a considerable distance. Walking allowed them to reflect on themselves. Participants were pleased with themselves for completing what appeared to be an insurmountable task. They trained their minds and bodies to become more goal-oriented:

I found myself part of that community of walking? (FP7)

Yes for fitness but more for the conversation with my Heavenly Father and myself (FP11).

I could push myself and find out what I could achieve (FP12).

To challenge myself and to improve on my health as I am experiencing some health issues (FP22).

My purpose for joining was to be accountable to myself as well as others for my health and fitness (FP23).

So walking was sort of my outlet for clearing my mind and also doing some introspection about myself and as a person staying alone, it does a lot for me, personally (FP30).

I feel proud of myself. Proud of myself, rewarding, it makes me feel like I am able to do it (FP32).

I have never encouraged myself to be so goal orientated to do more and walk more³ (P36).

³ Translation from Afrikaans to English.

These participants therefore had to go beyond their limits to walk a significant distance in order to focus on all the elements of maximising the best of themselves. The walking group set targets and goals to help people achieve and complete what they set out to do. If the participants want to accomplish their set targets and goals, they must challenge themselves.

5.10 Challenging one's own bounds is a test of self-discipline

When participants challenged themselves and pushed their boundaries, three areas of self-discipline were released, as gleaned from the data collected: how walking creates the opportunity for the participant to face life, how it serves as a game changer into making the impossible conceivable, and how it is a venture to confronting physical and emotional barriers. Life is an opportunity to test one's personal sense of self (cf. Watson, 2006), walking creates opportunities (cf. Sinclair, 1997), and walking in the surrounding environment has been found to significantly boost emotional responses and self-esteem (cf. Sinclair, 1997). Walking is a tool that allows the individual to face life and overcome everyday obstacles (cf. Peacock, Hine and Pretty, 2007). Participants FP5, FP6, FP11, MP19, and FP23 proposed walking and hiking as an intervention for addressing many challenges. Participants were engaged in interesting conversations when walking, especially while facing the same challenges as other walkers did. Even though COVID-19 had a detrimental effect on everyone, walking put positive perspectives on participants' well-being. All the above participants found walking to be a positive intervention when they experienced challenges.

I am up for a challenge and see fit to face life again (FP5).

[It] relaxes the mind, which enables me to deal with daily challenges. Especially walking in nature (FP6).

Walking and hiking became a tool to address challenges, pain, good news, insecurities and unresolved demands (FP11).

[The] opportunity to engage in meaningful conversation with fellow walkers who I often discover goes through similar challenges as I, and this helps me to understand (MP19).

[To] know that everyone was facing the challenges that Covid brought but still attempted to complete the challenges. Covid had a negative impact on everyone however the challenges put a positive spin on things (FP23).

In order to bridge the gap between the impossible and the achievable, participants challenged themselves. They found the consistency of walking every day unattainable at the start of the

walking challenge, but as they walked more, the impossible became doable. One participant, who was previously a non-walker, began to like walking after he or she had joined the group. Walking became plausible because the individual had never considered walking as way to improve her/his well-being before. It was difficult but not impossible for a participant(s) to take her/his first steps. The challenge appealed to the individuals, because working remotely made walking impossible. The impossible became doable, and the participants were able to move around more freely. Moving more freely because of the way the walking group motivated and gave participants ideas of how to expand their walking boundaries. Walking and finishing a walk for the day were enjoyable for these individuals. Managing time effectively allowed the unthinkable to become possible: see FP32, FP33, MP35 (age 30-39), and MP38 (age 20-29). The participants claimed that the impossible became possible:

Especially in the beginning of the challenges, things seem impossible but only impossible when you start doing it (FP32).

I started walking the challenge and I said ok yeah I will try and join it. I do not enjoy walking but ever since I joined I actually enjoy walking now (FP33).

For me it was a nice challenging especially because I was still working from home where I did not move as often as when I am at work⁴ (MP35).

Still coming home and walking a 5km walk, along with other house chores was really a challenge but after completion it was really rewarding and it also taught me some time management (MP38).

The participants concluded that dealing with mental and physical issues might be taxing at times, but walking created an environment in which you were able to not only address those challenges, but also move ahead from the emotional and physical distresses of life. Participants MP17, FP22, FP28, FP29, and MP37 decided that walking was a good way to deal with mental and physical challenges. Walking enabled the participants discussed in this section to deal with emotional and physical difficulties. They discovered that the challenge of pushing themselves improved their health. Walking allowed them to improve themselves by pushing their boundaries, by doing more, and walking more. Participants believed that being a participant of a dedicated walking group caused them to push themselves, that is, exert themselves beyond the levels, which they usually kept to, even on days when their energy levels were low. Individuals found it difficult to walk on some days. They were demotivated, but the

⁴ Translation from Afrikaans to English.

encouragement of fellow participants enabled them to persevere. Participants presented walking as a method to help them cope with the mental and physical issues of COVID-19.

Physical exercises like walking contributed greatly to a healthier mind and body in a time of extreme emotional and physical challenges (MP17).

To challenge myself and to improve on my health as I am experiencing some health issues (FP22).

Do push myself, to challenge myself and to improve every day a little more (FP28).

In addition, it challenges oneself to push even on days that you maybe have no energy. They held me accountable for my commitment. It started off irregular – on and off, had my days of difficulty but as the challenges went on Jay changed it up with the various challenges and dynamics (FP29).

Physical exercises like walking contributed greatly to a healthier mind and body in a time of extreme emotional and physical challenges. A healthier body ultimately contributes to a healthier mind and approach towards life. A positive mindset and attitude is therefore a big big contributor towards the challenges this pandemic creates on both your physical and emotional well-being (MP37).

Based on these responses, it is clear that walking acted as an intervention around improving physical and mental well-being of participants.

5.11 Walking: a mental and physical well-being intervention

Under the rubric of this theme, a number of features gleaned from the participants' perceptions of walking stood out to me. Walking offered them a healthy mind, alleviated stress, provided a safe environment to deal with daily issues, and improved their mental and physical health. Extant literature in fact confirms that walking is beneficial to both the mind and the body (Davies, 1999) and decreases stress (Hartig *et al.*, 2003). Walking alone has been proved to boost psychological and emotional well-being (cf. Hartig *et al.*, 2003; Berman, Jonides and Kaplan, 2008). Dovetailing with extant literature, it was clear that walking effected participants' entire being. They felt that a healthy mind produced a healthy body (MP16, FP24, MP20, and FP29). Walking helped with general well-being, cleared the mind, and was beneficial for the body; it put the participants' mind at peace, was soothing, and gave them new perspectives, and it was in fact agreed that walking kept the participants sane. MP16, FP24, MP20, and FP29 were all in agreement that walking was beneficial for their general well-being:

I tend to think that it might also be the other way around: a healthy mind can also produce a healthy body (MP16).

Not only is it beneficial for your mind but beneficial for your body (FP24).

[Walking] it puts me at ease, it takes my mind away [from worries] (MP20).

I've come to appreciate it more, it helps me clear my mind when working from home and being isolated (FP29).

Walking therefore created space for dealing with various issues according to MP19, FP24, FP27 (age 30-39) and MP37. It further created space for the individuals to cleanse their minds. As a healing intervention, the space created helped the individuals psychologically and emotionally. Consider here that the participants were restricted to a specific space, but walking in a walking community helped to alleviate the resultant isolation. While segregated and restricted to four walls at home, being a part of a walking society provided the opportunity for the participants to break free from mental bondage. They felt they were restricted to an isolated environment and walking became a solution:

Walking helps me to 'clear my head', because being out in nature provides me the space to feel healed (MP19).

It has helped, especially because of COVID because it is difficult to be in a confined space during this pandemic, so yeah (FP24).

So I think walking for me was a good mental thing but also physically because you are confined to your home space (FP27).

Being in isolation and being confined in an isolated space for a considerable amount of time was a big contributor (MP37).

Walking became a tool for participants not only to deal with the problems in a specific space, but also to relieve tension. Respondents MP17, MP20, FP29, MP37, FP39, and FP41 agreed that walking lowered stress levels and took attention away from daily tension. They acknowledged that they benefited from walking, since it was a tension reliever and a significant factor against anxiety and emotional stress. Walking was experienced as a way to relieve mental tension, stress, and all the negativity that surrounded them throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. After a stressful day, the participant found solace in walking:

[Walking] it relieves stress, improves memory, helps you sleep better, and boosts your overall mood and physical well-being (MP17).

[It takes my mind]away from the various stresses faced each day, it relaxes me in the most exhausting way possible and it knows exactly how to calm me down and how to give me a new perspective (MP20).

Physically I've benefitted and released all the tension or pressure of the pandemic and work has been beneficial for my well-being (FP29).

[Walking is] a big contributor towards anxiety, emotional stress and fear (MP37).

Walking during the pandemic was a relief of mental tension, stress and all the negativity that surrounded us during this pandemic period (FP39).

[Walking] calms me after a stressful day (FP41).

Walking, according to MP17, MP20, FP29, MP37, FP39, and FP41, promoted both mental and physical well-being, since it played a significant part in stress reduction. Not only did it play an essential role in mental and physical well-being, but also led to physical and mental wellness (FP1, FP27, MP16, FP29, MP37, FP41, and FP48). The participants discovered that increasing their walking frequency raised awareness of their mental condition. Due to actively walking, the respondents were in an excellent mental and physical state, and their view on life improved. Respondents mentioned that walking in general benefitted physical and mental well-being. Walking kept the participants psychologically, spiritually, and physically fit, and provided a mentally relaxing ambiance and their views are displayed as such.

Walking played an important role in my mental and physical well-being (FP1).

I think walking not only led to physical health but mental health as well (FP27).

Lately I am much more aware of the mental exercise I get when walking as oppose to the physical exercise (MP16).

Wow mentally and physically my whole outlook on life has improved (FP29).

[The]increase of emotional confidence, physical well-being and the general realisation of the benefits of walking in general and the integral part it could have in physical and emotional healing [played an important role] (MP37).

Walking keeps me mentally, spiritually and physically fit (FP41).

I enjoy the walks because it's peaceful, tranquil and mentally very calming (FP48).

All participants therefore agreed that walking was beneficial to their mental and physical health, as well as their general health and well-being.

5.12 Health is a walking relationship

The objective and type of walking relationship the participants wished to engage in were entirely dependent on the type of walking they wanted to enjoy. They referred to walking as a means of building a relationship in order to attain specific goals. These included starting a friendship with other members of a walking community, joining a WhatsApp group, or improving their walking abilities. While walking, walkers develop relationships and share unique experience and competencies. This sharing is a component of spiritual connectedness, as demonstrated in Chapter 2 of the present project. In a conversation with others, while conducting research about walking, Solnit (2001) discovered that the ideology of walking and thinking was intertwined in a mutual understanding pertaining to the connection between walking and thinking. My study found that, when people exercised their right to live a better life, they reached an accord with their body and mind. It is as if they had made a conscious decision to build a bond between mind and body in order to reach overall well-being. When participants engaged with the group, they felt accountable as a result of their interaction. Participants FP6, MP16, MP17, FP22, FP32, FP34, and MP35 believed that walking played an important role in controlling their weight and blood pressure. Improving the participants' health had an effect on her overall health, since it made them feel good:

Walking physically strengthens my muscles, and helps to control weight. I have discovered it is good for my skin. As for my health, it helps control my blood pressure being a hypertension patient. Overall, it just makes me feel good, healthy (FP6).

Walking every afternoon allowed FP6 to form a connection with the value of staying healthy and fit. There is a link between a healthy body and a healthy mind. The participant FP16 was considerably more conscious, whereas MP17 believed that physical activities such as walking were associated with a healthy mind and body:

I try to walk every afternoon and I found that it now has become much more than just a way to keep healthy and fit. Lately I am much more aware of the mental exercise I get when walking as opposed to the physical exercise. I tend to think that it might also be the other way around: a healthy mind can also produce a healthy body (FP16).

Physical exercises like walking contributed greatly to a healthier mind and body in a time of extreme emotional and physical challenges (MP17).

FP22, FP32, FP34 (age 30-39) and MP50 (age 30-39), thought that a challenge existed only when there was a connection between a healthy mind and body or an experience while walking. FP32 claimed that she built a relationship with her health because of her unborn baby, and FP34 found a way, by walking, to establish a bond with the value of maintaining a better lifestyle. MP50 stated, in resonance with these, that living a healthy lifestyle promoted a desire to be more active. All participants found a connection in the walking group amongst themselves and they could maintain a walking relationship:

To challenge myself and to improve on my health as I am experiencing some health issues (FP22).

During COVID I fell pregnant and I was diagnosed with gestational diabetes. I was kind of forced to have a healthier lifestyle in terms of what I eat and physical activities and because of COVID I couldn't go to a gym or being part of something where there were a lot of people, I started walking and it was something that I could do on my own because of COVID (FP32).

[Walking] improved my fitness level, and I maintain a healthier lifestyle⁵ (FP34).

The goal had been to be more active and get engaged as I sit 8 to 5 in front of a PC and work. I also want to be healthier and fitter (MP50).

The participants' perceptions and ways of thinking on the relationship between walking and health were in synergy. There was a sense of togetherness among walkers, who were able to improve their lifestyles as a result of walking. Participants FP1, FP23, FP27, FP33, and MP51 (age, 20-29), alluded to a relationship within a walking community among participants with a view to striving for improved health:

I wanted to improve my health and mental well-being and through this group I could manage to do this (FP1).

My purpose for joining was to be accountable to myself as well as others for my health and fitness. I needed the motivation to become less of a couch potato and to be more active. The results have been phenomenal (FP23).

It is not always that you are self-motivated to get up and do it. So for me it helps in terms of the community and getting healthy and I wanted to get healthier (FP27).

It has inspired me to move my butt and get up and do some exercise and with doing exercise it has led to me eating healthier as well (FP33).

So the team can motivate me to stay fit and healthy (MP51).

⁵ Translation from Afrikaans to English.

It is clear that the respondents all concurred that there was a link between maintaining and developing a relationship between mind and body with a view to improving health. When it comes to walking consistently and preserving a positive attitude, the participants' fresh perspective was important.

5.13 Walking with a fresh perspective

I have heard people say that they do not like walking or that they are not interested in it. How can that be, I asked several times, given that *Homo sapiens* has walked the world since the beginning of time? When one's baby takes his or her first steps, one is overjoyed, because it indicates mobility and independence. Why is it, when people become unwell and their walking becomes impaired, that they teach themselves to walk again by taking one-step at a time? To me this is an indication of just how vital walking is, while a considerable number of people have been conditioned to avoid walking due to its apparent inconvenience, not realising the severity or influence that this decision has on health. A change in viewpoint and a change in attitude are all that it requires to have a positive attitude towards walking. Physical activity and a healthy mind go hand-in-hand. Everyone can achieve anything if they keep a good mindset. According to extant literature, the rhythmic effect of walking practice entails that the person enters a specific meditative state (cf. Wunderlich, 2008; Slavin, 2003), which automatically promotes the walker's state of mind (cf. Berker, 2012). The change in attitude is due to the effect of walking on the individual's well-being. Participants in fact indicated that there was a distinct perception of a shift in thinking, a positive mindset, and the effect of walking as a game changer.

MP16, FP23, and FP30 saw walking as a technique for building a healthy body, which, in turn, promoted a healthy mind. Participants only felt a shift into a better mentality once their mindset had changed. They believed that walking allowed them to become more focused, shifting their perspective from the impossible to the achievable. Walking allowed them to clear their minds and exercise some introspection, thus transforming their perspective. MP16, FP23, and FP30 spoke of the link between walking and a fresh perspective:

The popular belief is that a healthy body produces a healthy mind (MP16).

It also changed my mindset from impossible to become more focused (FP23).

So walking was sort of my outlet for clearing my mind and also doing some introspection about myself and as a person staying alone, it does a lot for me, personally (FP30).

MP16, FP23, and FP30 clearly identified walking as an experience of eased mentality, which contributed to experiencing and observing a positive mindset. FP1, MP37, and FP39 all described the group's drive as involving a positive sense of belonging. Walking was perceived to be centred on having a happy thought and attitude. Participants agreed that walking allowed them to stay emotionally and physically fit by maintaining a happy attitude. They described this as follows:

It motivated me to walk consistently and I felt I did not want to disappoint the group. COVID isolated so many of us and the camaraderie shared in this amongst the walkers was good for me as a person (FP1).

A positive mindset and attitude is therefore a big big contributor towards the challenges this pandemic creates on both your physical and emotional well-being (MP37).

I can do anything I put my mind to, nothing is impossible with a positive mindset. I also learnt to never doubt myself (FP39).

Walking, according to FP1, MP37, and FP39, generated a positive mindset and attitude, but FP23, FP29, and FP31, ages 30-39, believed that walking was a game changer when it came to attitude. The participants pointed out the ability of walking to act as a transformer from a sense of impossibility into one of possibility. When participants were motivated and inspired by the walking group or walking community, a shift occurred around the way in which they regard walking. This experience of walking within a walking group or walking community creates a transition for participants. The inspiration to be found in the group made of walking something that made a difference in life:

[Walking] also changed my mindset from impossible to become more focused (FP23).

The walking group has been such a game changer, the motivation and inspiration one receives from the group brings a sense of unity, like we are in this together, supporting each other through it (FP29).

Definitely motivational and sense of belonging. To belong to something important and it was worth my time and it changed my life (FP31).

A synopsis of these responses is that walking was perceived to be a tool to clear the mind, even as it provided opportunity for individuals to improve their positive thinking and general mindset, while it was nothing less than a "game changer" around improving quality of life.

5.14 Effect of walking on the mind

The physiological impact of feeling good (enlightenment) is a continuation of the previous theme. For the purpose of this theme feeling good or enlightenment refers to the feeling of contentment. The ideas are clearly interconnected, and there is synergy among the various attributes within each theme. As indicated, walking clears the mind, resolves concerns and obstacles, and connects the participant with her/ his spirituality in order to further clear the mind. When participants found peace from their walking experiences, it cleared their minds, too. When participants cleared their minds, they were more likely to find stillness. As discussed in Chapter 3, spirituality and leisure are related by the interaction of variables that aim to achieve a certain state of mind and well-being. Participants FP24, FP29, FP30, FP44 (age 40-49) and MP51 believed that walking cleared the mind. Walking improved their health, once more. This is accomplished by clearing the mind, and participants believed that walking developed a solution to clear their minds when working remotely. Working remotely, participants worked from home and they were limited to a confined space during lockdown. Among others, walking helped clear thoughts because participants were isolated. Respondents found walking to be an outlet mechanism towards clearing their mind. Walking kept them active and cleansed their thoughts during COVID especially:

Walking helped my well-being, it cleared my mind (FP24).

I've come to appreciate it more, it helps me clear my mind when working from home and being isolated in one place gets too overwhelming (FP29).

So walking was sort of my outlet clearing my mind and also doing some introspection (FP30).

Walking clears my mind (FP44).

I've been working from home ever since the COVID pandemic, walking and jogging kept me active and my mind clear (MP51).

It is indisputable that walking created peace for participants as expressed among others by participant FP8:

I always see a form of peace that comes with walking, an expression on their faces that is unexplainable but relatable (FP8).

It is undeniable that calmness and peace were felt when walking, fostered spirituality in the participant. FP8 regarded walking as a way of restoring mind and body and felt that walking cultivated spirituality:

[It] spiritually allows one to be in a tranquil and quiet surrounding (FP8).

FP8 established that, when the soul and body were in a good condition, it was simpler to handle concerns, all in the process of walking. Participants MP2, FP6, MP17, and MP37 felt that walking solved problems that they had to confront and therefore evolved into an agency for resolving these problems. It addressed concerns and obstacles that participants confronted on a daily basis and there was a sense that walking contributed favourably to dealing with issues. All participants mentioned that walking created benefits in response to the severe concerns and obstacles presented by life and recognised the benefits of walking as follows:

One can think about issues you face, and allow your mind to work through those issues and find solutions to them while walking (MP2).

Offers a good mental stimulator and relaxes the mind, which enables me to deal with daily challenges (FP6).

Physical exercises like walking contributed greatly to a healthier mind and body in a time of extreme emotional and physical challenges (MP17).

Physical exercises like walking contributed greatly to a healthier mind and body in a time of extreme emotional and physical challenges (MP37).

These impressions enabled me to investigate the ways in which participants perceived walking to be a physical exercise for clearing the mind and resolving concerns. The subsequent section will therefore examine the ways in which participants' perspectives on life can be strengthened by physical activity such as walking.

5.15 Walking becomes life's enlightenment

The intention of walkers was to contemplate, wonder, and try to figure out things while walking. The benefit of constant walking is that it allows you to think. It produces an occasion to feel good and content (enlightened) about life. It reflects on where the person is going, what the person is going to do next, and how the person is going to get to his/ her goal from a specific point. Pondering to spend a significant amount of time thinking about something (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.) Pondering gives the walker the freedom to experiment and live life to the fullest. When walkers reflect on life, they experience some type of enlightenment. Leisure encourages enlightenment and suitable responses for the purpose of one's life. It expresses people's life interests, specifically as oriented spiritually on the inner senses of fulfilment and well-being (cf. Joblin, 2009:95). Walking gives the individual a feeling of goodness and

contentment, both of which are qualities of enlightenment. The sensation of understanding brings about change (cf. Davidsson-Bremborg, 2013). Walking allows people to reflect on their lives and meditate while doing so. For walkers, walking creates a stress-free environment that encourages them to share their stories and experiences with others. Walkers develop friendships that give them a sense of fulfilment and goodwill.

Participants FP10, FP13, FP23, FP24, and MP51 shared personal experiences among themselves of pondering life, stating that the best part of accompanying friends on a hike/ walk was that it allowed such pondering and reflection. Walking led to a more serene life that was filled with gratitude. While pondering life, they felt enlightened. Participants were undergoing transformation as a result of reflecting on life while walking, which was beneficial to bodily and mental well-being. Pondering about life while walking also permitted them to be more active and live a healthier life, which means thinking about things before making any decision

Whenever I've hiked a trail, I always return home with a renewed appreciation for mother nature and her abundance (FP10).

I am blessed to live near the ocean with vast stretches of safety and silence surrounded by mountains, which are the spaces in which I can lose my burdens and reconnect to what is most precious: a peaceful life filled with joy and gratitude (FP13).

It also changed my mindset from impossible to become more focused. The desire to excel from a personal perspective changed the quality of life for me (FP23).

So me personally where I am at this point in my life. I am in a process of transitioning, not only transitioning, my physical and mental state. Walking so actually helped me achieve my physical body weight but not only my physical but my mental well-being state as well (FP24).

It's making me want to be more active and live a healthier life (MP51).

All of these participants agreed that the idea of pondering life had become entwined with meditation. Meditation is an integral aspect of the walking experience. Walking is described as a process through which participants meditate in an attempt to communicate concerns (MP2, FP5, MP18 (age >60) and FP30). They acknowledged that walking was an intervention for individual well-being. When participants are distressed, they walk and feel better by meditating while walking. Their psychological and emotional condition improved as a result of the meditation that could be managed while walking. The act of walking was an antidote to psychological and emotional condition induced by meditation, allowing participants to undertake introspection while walking:

Through walking, I can only describe the experience as allowing one to ponder life during the walking process. One can think about issues you face, and allow your mind to work through those issues and find solutions to them while walking (MP2).

Sometimes I feel depressed and when I start walking, I feel better and I feel a better person too. I am up for a challenge and see fit to face life again (FP5).

“Overall walking during lockdown is good for me and I intend to stick to it even if we return to the life we had before (MP18).

So walking was sort of my outlet for clearing my mind and also doing some introspection about myself and as a person staying alone, it does a lot for me, personally (FP30).

Walking thus certainly became a way of coping. Participants walked to confront concerns and obstacles and, as a result, it became a stress relief mechanism. Participants FP7 and FP28 saw walking as a stress-reduction method. Participants further claimed that walking assisted in reducing stress levels, while pondering life improved their mental health, not least since some among them suffered from depression. FP17 and FP28 felt that walking was a means of suppressing stress and depression.

[Because of walking], I have found that my stress levels are much more controlled and balanced. I am happier and much more pleasant to be around. I have a much more positive outlook on life. I do believe that walking has majorly contributed to this (FP7).

Wow mentally physically my whole outlook on life has improved. I suffer from depression and this has really helped with the low days (FP28).

The study discovered, as indicated by FP7 and FP28, that there was a link between stress reduction, walking, and friendships formed while walking. Walking, according to FP6, FP8, and FP31 established a platform to encourage friendships. Friendships were in fact created while walking, allowing individuals to gain strength while considering life. Walking allowed them to get away from the demands and challenges of everyday life. They pondered life while enjoying their environment and the connections made with the environment while walking amongst others. Belonging to a walking group can transform a person's life, as indeed indicated by FP6, FP8, and FP31:

Through walking new friendships are formed. Through these friendships, we share our stories and we learn from each other. We draw strength from each other when life gets challenging (FP6).

Walking allows one to break away from the busy hustle and bustle of everyday life. It allows you to humble yourself in gratitude, thankfulness, appreciation and to be surrounded by amazing people walking with you (FP8).

Definitely motivational and sense of belonging. To belong to something important and it was worth my time and it changed my life (FP31).

FP6, FP8, and FP31 point out that contemplating life as well as meditation, connecting with people, creating friendships, and engaging in self-care are all part of the enlightenment process they went through. Walking seemed to have a significant impact on the lives of those who engaged it. While interacting with Mother Nature, the participants felt enlightened and, while walking, they enjoyed contentment. Their inner tranquillity reinforced their overall well-being, which was part of a spiritual awakening. FP9, FP10, FP45, and FP47 (age 30-39) walked because it facilitated their spiritual enlightenment:

This outlook of spirituality has a massive impact on my life and career, as with a little patience and faith, I'm able to overcome any obstacle. Due to this, I will always recommend it to others, so that they will see the quality of their life changed as well (FP9).

Whenever I've hiked a trail, I always return home with a renewed appreciation for mother nature and her abundance. So in essence...hiking improved my life. It also improved my relationship with my husband (FP10).

I am at peace when I walk. My inner peace contributes to my overall well-being. My overall well-being is the essence of my quality of life (FP45).

I walk because my Heavenly Father woke me up when I almost didn't make it. I thank him for sending "J" in my life just at the right time, I am grateful, I am blessed (FP47).

FP9, FP10, FP45, and FP47 actively demonstrated that individuals were walking in a state of enlightenment. When the walker walked and their spirit and soul were in a good place, there was an overall sense of well-being. In some ways, emotional, physical, and psychological well-being is dependent on the person's spiritual well-being. When one walks in a good spirit, the senses are in harmony with the immediate surroundings. It has been explored and mentioned in terms of the themes above that, when individuals were in touch with their surroundings, they could smell and hear better. They experienced contact and were in conversation with their Creator.

5.16 Spirit of harmonious feelings

While walking, distinct spiritual and harmonious sentiments are felt. While walking, participants expressed a combination of positive emotions and a feeling of contentment. A sense of harmony was fostered by the contentment of walkers walking in a group. In the context of everyday life, being calm and peaceful provided an opportunity to evaluate one's personal sense of identity in accord with nature. The entire environment, as well as existence in essence, is surrounded by a distinct sense of identity inspired by nature (cf. Watson, 2006). A peaceful and solitary environment could be transformed into a spiritual sanctuary (cf. Palmer, 2008). Nature creates a serene environment in which the walker can enjoy his or her walk (cf. Davidsson-Bremborg, 2013). Individual well-being is aided by positive feelings and satisfaction. Regularity and continuous movement, with no sudden pauses or starts, are essential for overall well-being. When a person's life is going well, he or she is happy and fulfilled (cf. Raibley, 2012). As a result, harmony emerged, and the participants implied that it was more than an encounter. Harmony is about continuity, well-being, and contentment, not just a feeling or a quiet walk. Harmony is experienced by participants in terms of consistency, goodwill, kinship, and unity, peace, understanding, and pleasantness. Participants FP3 and FP32 understood the reasoning behind harmony, which allowed the participants to feel more at ease. Although they could not walk every day, the conformity of knowing that there was consistency within the group, motivated them. On a daily basis, the group leader and the members of the group would interact with each other. FP3 and FP32 explained the spirit of harmonious feelings as follows.

I just wish I could have done it consistently every day. But I will keep on walking no matter what (FP3).

So it was not every day that I could do the 10 000 steps but when I do I feel proud of myself. Proud of myself, rewarding, it makes me feel like I am able to do it (FP32).

As observed by FP3 and FP32, the next sequence of harmony ideas includes a sentiment of goodwill. Walking therefore reinforced the sentiment of harmony experienced by participants FP6 and FP26 (age >60), who recognised goodwill as an experience encountered when they connected with the group as they were walking on the beach. FP6 and FP26 perceived a sense of goodwill as follows:

Overall, it just makes me feel good, healthy (FP6).

Especially when I go with you guys to the beach and that, for me it is very encouraging and I feel good doing that (FP26).

The group's goodwill, as indicated by FP6 and FP26, contributed to the participants' feelings of harmony, as supplemented by kinship and understanding. Participants MP20, FP24, and MP38 indicated that there was kinship and understanding amongst participants when walking which had a good influence on them. Individuals were unable to join social groups due to constraints, yet this walking group fostered a sense of connection. The fellowship among walkers produced a sense of camaraderie. Participants believed they were capable of going to any combat or battle with their fellow walkers:

You feel like you have gone to war with people around you, and conquered the battle (MP20).

You could no longer join your social groups or go out to the groups or various things that made you feel part of something else (FP24).

You may know and for hours not say a single word to each but at each pit stop or at the end of trail you feel like you have gone to war with people around you, and conquered the battle (MP38).

While walking, MP20, FP24, and MP38 all agreed that there was kinship and understanding amongst the participants. It was related to a further sentiment centred on harmony, which is the attribute of pleasantness. FP3, FP5, FP10, FP26, and FP43 (age 20-29) regarded contentment or pleasantness to be attributes of harmony also with a view to a sense of feeling energised after their walk. Walking made the participants feel positive. They experienced happiness and, in the process, reduced their worries and stress levels. Walking permitted them to feel victorious and the participants felt pleasant when they were able to walk. All of them perceived walking to be victorious:

I feel more energised. Can walk for long distances and not get very tired (FP3).

Sometimes I feel depressed and when I start walking, I feel better and I feel a better person too (FP5).

First of all [walking] makes me happy and reduces my anxiety and stress levels (FP10).

It made me feel very good. You feel victorious. You are victor even over your circumstances (FP26)

[I]feel amazing and relieved. There are times I think that I might not complete it on certain days and then I surprise myself. And I'm happy to continue (FP43).

It is obvious that participants felt overwhelmed at times by the result of walking on the body. Despite the limitations and challenges of COVID-19, participants enjoyed walking.

5.17 Walking during the COVID-19 pandemic

I recall the initial lockdown restrictions and controls imposed in March 2020, when residents were unable to freely move around. Everyone was confined to their homes and could only go shopping at specific hours. I recall pacing in the lounge area, around the table, walking up and down the stairs, and even dashing down the driveway. When that was not enough, I went for a walk on YouTube. QoL centres on how well human needs are met, or how much enjoyment or dissatisfaction individuals or communities experience around specific aspects of life (cf. Papachristou and Rosas Casals, 2015), while walking serves as a means of repair to increase well-being (cf. Maddrell, 2013). COVID-19 has had an impact on everyone in some way. Walking provided a forum for people to express their problems and challenges. Once more, walking, according to participants, improved their general well-being during COVID restrictions. Participants believed that well-being was dependent on a sense of belonging produced by the group, emotional support provided by the group, and participation.

Despite the fact that society was subjected to limits and controls under COVID-19, walking played an essential role in the participants' emotional and physical well-being (FP1, FP22, FP24, and MP25 (age >60)). The constraints made it difficult for the participant to walk freely and hindered their movement, but once these had been eliminated, the individuals were glad to walk again. Participants, like the rest of the people in South Africa, were confined to their homes and developed ways to continue moving. During the constraints induced by the lockdowns, some of the participants walked in front of the mirror. FP1, FP22, FP24, and MP25 moved around during COVID-19, as follows:

During COVID-19, with all the restrictions and regulations imposed on society, the mere fact that you could move through walking played an important role in my mental and physical well-being (FP1).

COVID restricted me and I did not do much walking, due to my comorbidities and restrictions that were put in place during lockdown, as before (FP22).

There was minimal movement so in the beginning of COVID we were not able to exercise; once the restrictions were a bit lifted we were able to have some movement (FP24).

I stand in one place in front of the mirror then with my feet flat, knees bent, as if you want to walk, for an hour or two until I feel I have had enough. It [walking] did not allow me to sit still during COVID. I will talk about walking the whole day. I love walking⁶ (MP25).

FP1, FP22, FP24, and MP25 all agreed that walking helped them cope with the COVID-19 epidemic. It is clear that the WhatsApp group and virtual walking in a group facilitated coping with the constraints. Participants FP27, FP34, and MP51 found walking to be the only exercise they could engage in during COVID, given the fact that it was necessary for them to be active throughout COVID. Participants mentioned that it was important to stay active and fit:

Doing not all that much, physically, walking was the only form of exercise for me within COVID; well it is still COVID, within the lockdown period. So physically it was a big benefit (FP27).

For me to stay active and in a routine during COVID was important (FP34).

I'm working from home ever since the covid pandemic, walking and jogging kept me active and my mind clear⁷ (MP51).

FP27, FP34, and MP51 felt that managing and continuing to walk in a group made it easier for them to pursue their goals. FP22 and FP32 felt that movement was limited during COVID-19 restrictions, while the walking group inspired them to walk. Participants stated that participating in the group and walking were things they could do on their own despite COVID-19 restrictions:

Even though the interaction were at a minimal, it created a platform for us to do the things we love (walking/hiking) together as a group (but individually) and still be motivated by whatever amount of steps/kilometres the other group members achieved and motivates you to either achieve the same amount or better it (FP22).

Because of COVID I could not go to a gym or be part of something where there were a lot of people. I started walking and it was something that I could do on my own because of COVID (FP32).

COVID-19 affected so many individuals' emotions, and FP24 and FP34 shared their thoughts as part of the walking community on the WhatsApp group. Walking improved the participants'

⁶ Translation from Afrikaans to English.

⁷ Translation from Afrikaans to English.

mental state during COVID-19 (FP24 and FP34) and contributed to a positive mood, as indicated by FP24 and FP34:

[Walking] has helped my mental state, especially because of COVID because it is difficult to be in a confined space during this pandemic, so yeah (FP24).

Walking was definitely one of the factors that enlighten the mood during COVID⁸ (FP34).

While participants FP24 and FP34 were focusing on positive things, their overall well-being improved. Participants FP23, FP31, and FP39 felt that walking facilitated the avoidance of the negative effects of COVID. They mentioned that walking was an intervention that kept them attentive during COVID. Participants were able to keep their minds busy and the attention was on their health, which walking allowed them to retain during COVID.

It helped me take my focus off the negative aspects of COVID and gave me something else to focus on (FP23).

During COVID, walking was a means of relaxation and also entertainment. Keeping yourself busy occupies your mind, taking your mind off things (FP31).

Being physically during the pandemic, I truly say improved my health, assisted with blood circulation and also tensed muscles (FP39).

It is undeniable that all of the characteristics belonging under the rubric of this theme facilitated the participants' emotional and physical well-being. Walking, according to them, contributed to their overall well-being during COVID (FP24, FP29, and MP37). They perceived it to be a blessing during the COVID pandemic, since it helped them with their well-being. During this time, participants noticed that walking provided both bodily and mental well-being:

Walking helped my well-being, it cleared my mind. Not only is it beneficial for your mind but beneficial for your body. You feel so much better after walking as well. It has helped my mental state, especially because of COVID (FP24).

Walking has been a blessing during COVID. I have benefitted and released all the tension or pressure of the pandemic and work has been beneficial for my well-being (FP29).

A positive mindset and attitude is therefore a big big contributor towards the challenges this pandemic creates on both your physical and emotional well-being (MP37).

⁸ Translation from Afrikaans to English.

At first, walking during the COVID-19 pandemic was challenging due to controls and restrictions. As participants settled into a pattern, exploring new methods and means of moving around, the effect on their physical and mental health became clear. The link between the physical, mental, and spiritual realms enabled the participants to go deeper into themselves in order to improve their complete well-being.

5.18 Walking with the Creator

Walking transforms into a spiritual journey and a spiritual tool for prayer and combating spiritual warfare (cf. Lucas, 2008). Walking develops spiritual qualities and resembles a form of resistance to the frantic pace of life, and spiritual walking is a one-of-a-kind experience. Participants enjoyed a unique connection with their Creator. FP5, FP8, FP11, FP14, FP44, and FP47 considered their encounter with the Heavenly Father to be one in which they were not alone, since he was there for them. While walking, the participants believed that the Creator was there and felt safe. When the participants walked, they were awoken by the Creator. They recognised a sense of security:

I'm currently in Yzerfontein and did a beach walk by myself. As I prayed while walking, I told myself I'll stop at 5k steps and turn back. When I reached the point I found this cross in front of me. It reminded me that even though I think I'm walking alone, I'm not. He is with me (FP44).

I walk because my Heavenly Father woke me up when I almost didn't make it (FP47).

Walking allowed these individuals to communicate with the Creator. While walking, some of the participants were in conversation with the Creator. There was a silent dialogue between the Creator and the participants and participants could communicate with him about various issues, as expressed by FP5 and FP14:

When I walk, I walk and talk with Jesus. Talking with Jesus allows me to get some answers if something bothers me (FP5).

Nobody just me and Him talking silently as I admire all my Creator has created (FP14).

It is clear that, as the participants FP5 and FP14 walked, they felt comfortable, enjoyed revelations, and were in close discussion with the Heavenly Father. They found peace and freedom as a result of their encounter. The participants believed that walking in the mountains and talking to the Creator offered a sense of freedom (FP11 and FP8). When the participants

walked, they felt at ease, because they knew that their Creator was walking alongside them. Two participants explained their experiences as follows:

I could walk in the mountains, feel the sun on my skin, talk to my Heavenly Father, listen to the peacefulness of nature and feel free. So why do I walk or hike? Yes for fitness but more for the conversation with my Creator and myself (FP11).

Spiritually it allows one to be in a tranquil and quiet surrounding just speaking to your maker, knowing that His walking with you. I always see a form of peace that comes with walking (FP8).

Overall, the themes explored suggest that participants felt a feeling of connectedness and ease with one another.

5.19 Conclusion

This chapter discussed participants' perceptions and experiences while walking and exploring a personalised path. The narrative was formed around a thematic analysis that emerged from the data collection process. The various themes explain the impact or influence of walking on the participants' overall well-being. The themes tell a story about how participants applied walking and how this dovetailed with some of the attributes of Martin Seligman's PERMA model. The themes confirmed that the act of walking finds itself in a discursive position amongst the different experiences articulated by participants. It became clear that participants shared a number of similar experiences with respect to the effect of walking on their overall well-being.

Participants found walking to be relaxing. They found the positive effect of walking to be a key to building confidence. While walking, participants' quality of life was noticeable. Their health improved as a result of inner serenity. The participants' walking of the personalised journey established a connection between it and spirituality. Everyone seemed to see spiritual growth as a journey. In order to find out what kind of walk suited each participant, he/ she needed to reflect on their journey and the experiences gained by it. As opposed to the notion of a final destination, the participants' perception of a walk was shaped by their experience of the journey. This journey of self-discovery was made possible by the personalised walking experience.

The findings reveal that people with a strong sense of self are more likely to reach and fulfil their goals. In order for the participants to achieve their goals, they had to push themselves

harder. As a test of self-discipline, the challenging of one's boundaries arose, and it became evident that walking was an effective strategy for enhancing both physical and mental health. There were no disagreements among the participants about the benefits of walking for their mental and physical health as well as their overall well-being. I established that maintaining and creating a relationship between the participants' mind and body is essential for improving their health. When it comes to keeping up with the rest of the group and consistency, the participant's way of thinking was found to be imperative. As a result of walking with a positive attitude, the participant's spirit and soul were in a good place, and he/ she enjoyed a good overall sense of well-being. Mental health, physical health, and emotional health are all influenced by our spiritual well-being in some way. Having a pleasant attitude when walking allowed participants to be more aware of their surroundings. For me, the researcher, it was interesting to see how participants viewed walking as a physical workout meant to clear their mind as well as enabling them to deal with worries because of the ways in which it influenced their perceptions. Walking is a life-changing experience. Participants were sometimes overwhelmed by the results of the walking body's efforts as a consequence of the sense of harmony that arose for them as an event towards their overall well-being. Walking during the COVID-19 epidemic was at first challenging and the effects of walking on physical and mental health became apparent. However, individuals fell into a routine and explored new methods and means of moving around. For example, participants were able to improve their overall well-being by connecting the physical, mental, and spiritual realms. The participants identified walking to be a source of comfort and companionship.

The next chapter will continue to focus on the walking journey of participants. It will include participants' perceptions and impressions while walking a personalised COVID trail, as well as their successes and accomplishments during this undertaking. The approach and manner in which the personalised trail was completed are elaborated and discussed in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6

Stepping it up: The personalised steps and kilometres

6.1 Introduction

This chapter builds on the previous one and centres on pilgrimage walking and spiritual well-being as related to a personalised COVID trail. The personalised route could be walked from anywhere and could be done indoors, around the house, or even with the help of a YouTube video. During the initial lockdown people were confined to their homes. Although studies in pilgrimage walking and spiritual well-being have examined the effect of leisure activities, there has not been a study on a personalised COVID trail/ pilgrimage in the South African context. As such, this chapter provides additional insight into exploring perceptions of participants walking a personalised COVID trail. The analytical focus on participants' perception and experiences through different digital tools enabled a deeper understanding of pilgrimage walking. Walking was found to manifest itself in this study in a discursive way. The concept of individual well-being will be discussed in terms of different features of walking. These include the act of movement, the ability to move footsteps in a sequence, encouragement extending boundaries, a sense of association, the purpose of a personalised journey, to name a few. All the features of walking mentioned are intertwined. The attributes of walking as viewed by participants and the escalation of walking sub-matrix will be discussed and viewed. As will be shown, these attributes differ from person to person. The attributes of walking are subjective and it can be achieved through different means and ways.

6.2 An act of movement

The act of movement relates to participants' specific purpose whilst walking. Walking is a particular type of movement. Physical activities such as walking, jogging, and aerobics (cf. Stoddard, 1997) have been observed to have significant positive impact on both short- and long-term health outcomes (cf. Coleman, 1997). Consistency and moderate mobility are required for well-being, with no abrupt stops or pauses (cf. Raibley, 2012).

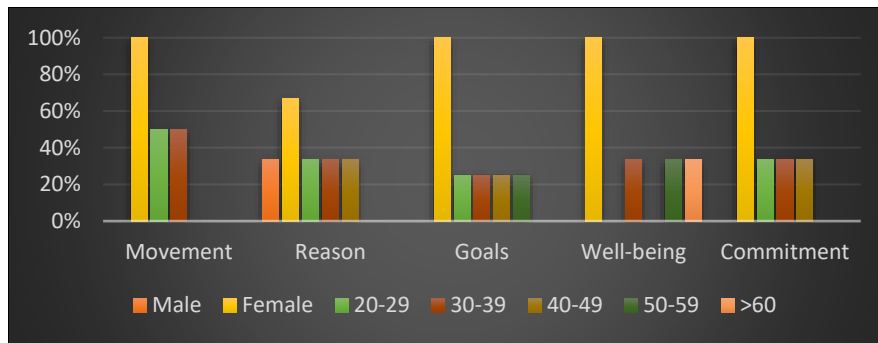


Figure 6.1: Walking as an act of movement

Figure 6.1 demonstrates the features of walking in terms of movement, reason, goals, and commitment. The figure displays the ratio of female to male and age categories of participants and the effect of walking on individual well-being. Mental determination was found to be an act of applying motivation in moving forward. With regard to participants' manner of movement, there were those who pushed themselves to the edge of their limits. For participants FP12 (age 30-39) and FP24 (age 20-29), pushing forward was considered to be a movement. As they moved, they were able to push themselves forward. COVID-19 restrictions did not prevent them from moving around. Despite the restrictions, movement had a positive impact on their overall well-being. Pushing was identified as an act of walking by FP12 and FP24:

I could push myself and find out what I could achieve as this was my first real physical test since I had surgery on my ankle 2 years ago (FP12).

[Walking] contributed during COVID because the majority of us were not allowed to go out⁹. There was minimum movement so in the beginning of COVID we were not able to exercise. Once the restrictions were a bit lifted we were able to have some movement. Walking helped my well-being, it cleared my mind. Not only is it beneficial for your mind but beneficial for your body (FP24).

This shows that walking guided the agenda and pushed the motivation for the walking commitment to a greater level of intensity. Participants FP22 (age 40-49), FP29 (age 30-39), and MP51 (age 20-29) believed that their walking was motivated by a specific reason. The individuals were able to push themselves because of the group's motivation. The role of the group became one of motivation and inspiration with a view to extending walking parameters.

⁹ Clarity about this is given in Chapter 4.

Working remotely posed a number of difficulties for the participants. However, being in a group pushed participants FP22, FP29 and MP51 to accomplish more.

It feels awesome and it motivates you to even do more steps than the required amount and to push through [walking] one-step at a time (FP22).

The walking group has been such a game changer, the motivation and inspiration one receives from the group brings a sense of unity, like we are in this together, supporting each other through it (FP29).

Yes, working from home since the COVID pandemic started is really difficult because it makes a person lazy but now that I'm part of the group it pushes me to walk and exercise (MP51).

These participants referred to walking as a means of moving forward and achieving ambitions and goals. They described setting objectives as a way to motivate themselves. This insight, however, also surfaced in the responses of other participants. FP23 (age 40-49) pointed out that setting goals helped her to drive herself forward. FP30 (age 50-59) felt that walking included her in a pattern that she had never experienced before. As a result of her commitment, she was able to achieve her goals more easily. FP31 (age 30-39) and FP33 (age 40-49) similarly stated that walking and recording steps with either a Smartphone or Health watch in their group helped them to achieve their goals. When participants first started walking, they did not understand what they were getting themselves into. They undertook the journey and pushed themselves to see what would happen and how this journey would unfold in terms of their expectations. In the words of the following participants:

When I achieved my goals, it was astounding to me that I could actually push my body that far without any adverse ramifications (FP23).

[Walking] in a group pushed me somehow into a routine, which I never had before. Like I said, I like walking, but it was like, oh, I am doing it today and two days, three days go by when I wasn't in the mood. But somehow I persisted and persevered. So that is what it pushes, being consistent (FP30).

I really wanted to do something active and I never really had the drive and motivation. I needed that, I needed to do that. I am not someone to walk on my own. A group effort, other people are doing it, reminders, seeing other people posting their steps or what they have done for the day. That motivated and pushed me. To do something active [like walking] (FP31).

Achieving my steps is a challenge for me. I didn't enjoy walking as much as I should have, so I pushed myself, it is a challenge. I keep on checking my phone to see how many kilometres I have

walked. If I didn't walk enough, I would walk in my room, in my drive-way, you know. Achieving walking my number of steps was not easy. I must be very, very honest (FP33).

The performance and development of the respondents were definitely influenced by the goals they set for themselves. Participants' perspectives and perceptions led to the belief that setting goals influenced their well-being. Participants FP26 (age >60), FP30 (age 50-59), and FP32 (age 30-39) described the act of pushing as a way of moving forward, which they also regarded as a health-promoting attribute. The lack of movement during the initial lockdown influenced FP26's health in a negative way and he had to improvise by walking in front of the mirror. Taking a walk encouraged FP30 to be more active, which improved her mental health and well-being. FP32 agreed that the initial lockdown came with challenges, while the group helped her to push herself to walk. All three participants experienced the effect of walking as a pushing mechanism in one way or the other.

I say it feels good for your body, you can see the change in your body weight and it pushes up your energy levels (FP26).

Firstly, it was for me a mental thing because walking affects your mental wellness. I am not a scientist, my idea is that it [walking] does something to the brain (FP30).

So for me, it was about that, about the physical but not only the physical. It was a mental thing because being a mother and a wife and a full-time employee and having other responsibilities, it got so hectic during COVID (FP32).

These responses clearly indicate that the state of health is important to participants. Their ability to move and push themselves beyond their limitations improved or enhanced their performance. As a result of the participants' strong commitment, they were able to perform effectively with a view to their strong desire for total well-being. Participants acknowledged that a certain way of moving helped them push boundaries when they fulfilled their commitments. FP24 (age of 20-29), FP28 (age 40-49), and FP29 (age 30-39) indicated that they were motivated by commitment. This increased their achievement (number of steps completed), and walking helped them to push themselves even further. As a result, they felt obliged to follow through on their commitments and consequently made a deliberate effort to do so. In their own words:

So joining this group, I felt a sense of belonging. We had a purpose. We had to post our steps every day. So there was, how can I put this now, basically a routine, you getting into a routine.

So like I was saying COVID restricted us from participating, uhmm how can I say, going on with our normal routine our usual daily activities was taken away (FP24).

My goal is to push myself, to challenge myself and to improve every day a little more (FP28).

In addition, [walking] challenges oneself to push even on days that you maybe have no energy. They held me accountable for my commitment (FP29).

These responses of FP24, FP29, and FP29 implied that walking is a type of movement that involves a number of traits and aspects. Walkability thus constituted a participant’s ability to allow footsteps to move sequentially.

6.3 Ability to move footsteps sequentially

When on foot, the individual explores and discovers the experiences as he or she moves forward in synchronisation with the surroundings. There are limitless possibilities and opportunities to be explored when walking (cf. Koyama, 1979). Kun *et al.* (2017:56-63) argue that a person’s objectives, ambitions, standards, and worries are shaped by the culture and value systems in which they live. Among these are the individual’s physical health, psychological status, independence, social ties, and connectedness to essential attributes of their world (cf. WHOQOL Group, 1995: 1404). In addition, the way we look at life and what we strive to do all contribute to overall well-being.

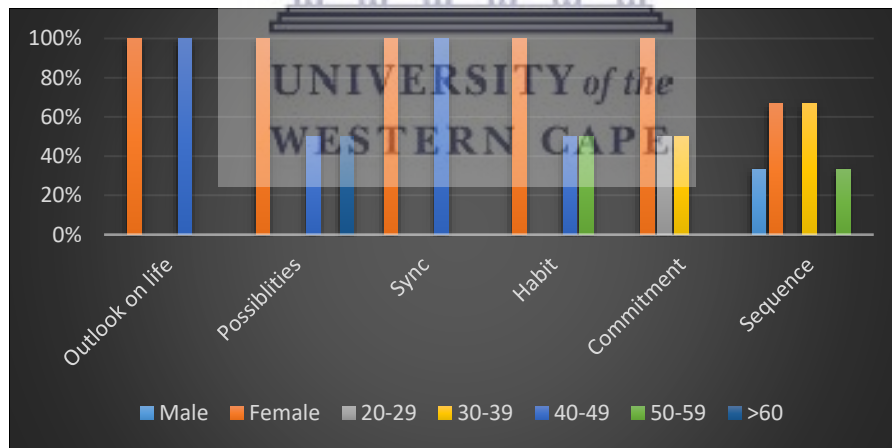


Figure 6.2: Ability to move footsteps sequentially

Figure 6.2 displays the responses from female and male participants in the different age categories and their interpretation of the movement of footsteps sequentially. The graph indicates movement in terms of outlook on life, possibilities, synchronisation, habit,

commitment, and sequence. Synchronisation indicates the connection between the different attributes of movement.

Walking in a sequence was seen as an indicator of one's outlook on life, quality of life, and possibilities offered. The activities FP9 (age 40-44) engaged in evolved into habits and a desire to complement individual well-being. This participant saw life as a metaphor that is in tune with her walking:

This outlook has a massive impact on my life and career, as with a little patience and faith, I'm able to overcome any obstacles (FP9).

Thus outlook on life influenced quality of life. FP9 was of the opinion that walking was in synchronisation with her quality of life, while FP23 (age 40-49) desired for change and improved quality of life which were also in synchronisation with their walking. They stated following:

Due to [improved quality of life], I will always recommend it [walking] to others, so that they will see the quality of their life changed as well (FP9).

[Walking] also changed my mindset from impossible to becoming more focused. The desire to excel from a personal perspective changed the quality of life for me (FP23).

Possibilities have a direct impact on people's quality of life as reflected here. Because the participants' walking synchronised with possibilities (FP12, female, >60 years old; P23, female, 40 to 49 years old), they perceived that possibilities facilitated well-being. As suggested by FP9 and FP23, the synchronisation of possibilities opened up new possibilities. The demonstration by FP12 (age >60) and FP23's act of walking indicated they were capable of more than they believed, and this led to a sense of new possibilities. They hinted at it by saying the following:

This just shows that so many things are possible if you just put your mind to it, you can achieve anything (FP12).

When I achieved my goals it was astounding to me that I could actually push my body that far without any adverse ramifications. It set a precedent that I am able to and that I could possibly achieve more (FP23).

FP12 and FP23 demonstrated the potential of the capacity to move forward in a series of steps. During a walk, participants' needs to improve their well-being were addressed, and the things

they accomplished formed part of a contribution towards their well-being. FP22 (age 40-49) and FP45 (age 50-59) described the discussion they had with other walkers while walking as part of those qualities of walking that are in harmony with a platform built towards engaging pleasant activities. Walking gave them the opportunity to interact in some way while walking in a sequence that they enjoyed. As they put it:

Even though the interaction was minimal, it created a platform for us to do the things we love (walking/hiking) together as a group (but individually) and still be motivated by whatever number of steps/kilometres the other group members achieved. [This] motivates you to either achieve the same amount or better it (FP22).

The type of walking I do is more than the act on foot. It defines the person that I am. Every day my kms/steps are a personal achievement (FP45).

FP22 and FP45 suggested that, as individuals, they enjoyed specific things, and when individuals enjoy something, they become creatures of habit. Participants viewed walking as a habit that had a good impact on their life and well-being. This, for instance, also reflected in the responses of FP24 (age 20-29) and FP34 (age 30-39), who viewed walking as a habit of commitment that helped them to be in step with their walk. They responded thus:

When I do not walk my number of steps, I need to walk more. So I would then walk more or walk around in the yard (FP24).

I think my achievement forms part of my commitment. Commitment leads to a habit and a habit is to walk every day as much as possible ¹⁰ (FP34).

When it came to walking for health reasons, these two participants (FP24 and FP34) felt that to stay in a routine increased and improved their overall well-being. The participants' interests and needs influenced their habit of walking, which was developed over time. The development of walking was confirmed by their experiences, as attested to also by FP29 (age 30-39), FP30 (age 50-59), and MP35 (age 30-39), who alluded to the fact that walking-related wants and needs were felt to be sensations of the experience of walking. They found their routine in order to attain a sequence of walking. In order to complete their walking sequence, they claimed that they had to persevere. The desire to complete a sequence motivated all three of them to do their best:

¹⁰ Translation from Afrikaans to English.

[I] wanted to achieve my steps and kilometres daily. When I felt under the weather on rainy days or I was just exhausted, my mind was so programmed to tell my body it needs to walk. I'm more consistent in my want to achieve the steps and kilometres. Physically my body was changing and that encouraged me more to achieve my set amounts or go beyond that (P29).

[I] did not want to continue. I tried to be consistent. I had to do something, setting goals and I had to achieve it (FP30).

[I] try to everyday achieve my target of 10 000 steps¹¹ (MP35).

In order to enjoy walking, there must be a connection among the steps taken to prepare for the walk. These three participants suggested that the pace they set for themselves created a walking synergy amongst the actual steps of their walk. As a result, participants were motivated and inspired. They agreed that a little encouragement helped them expand their walking.

6.4 Encouragement stimulates the expansion of boundaries

There are a number of features and benefits associated with encouragement when it comes to walking. In this section I will show how participants' engagement with walking originated from a WhatsApp group. This will also highlight the relationship between encouragement, boundaries, health, inspiration, and motivation. I will also demonstrate the relationship between limited or no engagement and participants' reaction to their fellow group members. When it comes to walking, there are no limits or constraints, since it is a physical activity that expands boundaries (see Bassett, 2004; cf. Kagge, 2019).

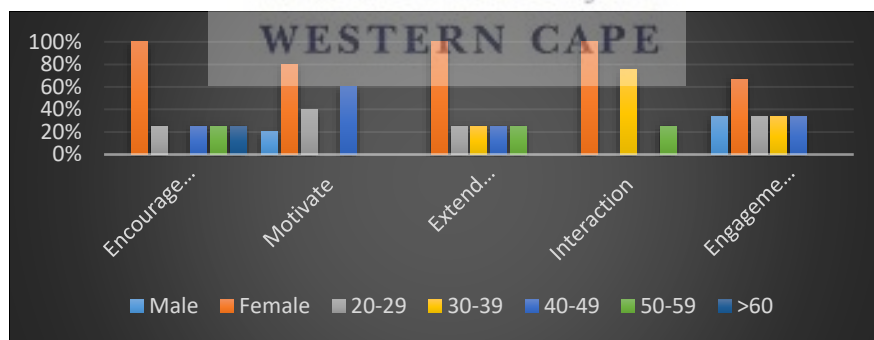


Figure 6.3: Encouragement stimulates the expansion of boundaries

Figure 6.3 depicts the number of participants' perspectives on how they feel encouraged while walking. The figure also shows the female to male ratio in terms of expanding boundaries as a result of group encouragement, motivation, interaction, and engagement.

¹¹ Translation from Afrikaans to English.

Participants FP1 (age 50-59), FP5 (age >60), FP7, (age 20-29) and FP22 (age 40-49) said that the group encouraged and motivated others to walk. FP1, FP5, FP7, and FP22 mentioned the following:

Some days I did not feel like getting out of bed but the inspiration from the group motivated me to get out of bed and walk. At times I felt depressed and negative but walking and being part of this group kept my sanity (FP1).

I want to encourage people to start walking. It will take stress away and you will feel enlightened from problems. You will be able to face your problems (FP5).

I have recently received very good news that has encouraged me to walk even more because I understand the importance and benefits thereof (FP7).






[Encouragement] feels awesome and it motivates you to even do more steps than the required amount and to push through ... one-step at a time (P22).

Clearly, FP1 walked with the support of FP5, FP7, and FP22, and they continued to walk. They were encouraged and felt motivated for achieving their goals and expanding their boundaries while walking. According to the information recorded from participants FP22 (age 40-49), FP33 (age 40-49), FP40 (age 20-29), MP42 (age 20-29), and FP48 (age 40-49), various members of the group pushed participants to greater achievement, prompting them to expand their walking boundaries as a result of the encouragement they received from the group. Participants viewed walking as a way to be inspired and to broaden their outlook on life. The individuals were motivated to keep in shape. This encouragement shifted their perspectives, which was the driving force behind their decisions. Walking therefore motivated and encouraged them to keep going:

[Walking] together as a group (but individually) and still be motivated by whatever number of steps/kilometres the other group members achieved and motivates you to either achieve the same amount or better it (FP22).

[Encouragement] has inspired me to move my butt and get up and do some exercise and with doing exercise it has led to me eating healthier as well (FP33).

Walking motivates me to stay fit (FP40).

As a new starter this is an amazing way to stay motivated      (MP42).

I found the group a great encouragement and huge motivation. Usually never used to exercise but now I'm accountable to the group and myself (FP48).

These participants were clearly encouraged and motivated to keep walking to the extent where they were able to push themselves further, walk farther, and perform better. To them, walking continuously and pushing boundaries made this possible. Extended boundaries encouraged FP1, (age 50-59), FP23 (age 40-49), FP27 (age 30-39), and FP43 (age 20-29) to move beyond their limits, which led to positive results. They stated that being more actively motivated encouraged them to extend their walking boundaries. All of them felt motivated to reach their goals, as evidenced by the following responses:

[Results] motivated me to walk consistently and I felt I did not want to disappoint the group (FP1).

I needed the motivation to become less of a couch potato and to be more active. The results have been phenomenal (FP23).

For me it was definitely to get more active and I needed to get active and also for the motivation from everybody else. For me that is a big thing, it is important to be part of something when I do something (FP27).

I like how everyone posts their targets in the group. It is also a source of motivation, that you need to get yours completed, and do not want to be left behind (FP43).

All of these participants observed that encouraging others resulted in the overcoming of limits. As a result of this, the participants' health improved. Individuals had a strong desire to keep healthy and fit. MP51 (age 20-29), FP33 (age 40-49), and FP27 regarded walking as an activity that inspired them to live a healthy lifestyle, which had emerged as a result of the group's encouragement. Participants' lives were shaped by their passion for walking. In spite of a number of ailments felt by some participants, the act of walking aided in the improvement of their health:

So the team can motivate me to stay fit and healthy (MP51).

[Walking as an activity] has inspired me to move my butt and get up and do some exercise and with doing exercise it has led to me eating healthier as well (FP33).

It is not always that you are self-motivated to get up and do it. So for me it helps in terms of the community and getting healthy and I wanted to get healthier (FP27).

These three participants stated that walking in a community created a platform where other participants' encouraged each other. Encouragement was an indicator of that which drove them to achieve more and stay consistent. Participants in turn enhanced their health by walking. FP29, FP31 (age 30-39), PF34, and FP39 (age 50-59) claimed that the WhatsApp group

members motivated them to keep taking one-step at a time. Empowering participants to keep walking was the group's motivation. As a result, the group interaction was exciting and individuals felt energised. Because of the group's energy and enthusiasm, the participants felt compelled to expand their boundaries, as reflected in the following responses:

In addition, it challenges oneself to push even on days that you maybe have no energy. They held me accountable for my commitment (FP29).

I really wanted to do something active and I never really had the drive and motivation. I needed that, I needed to do that. I am not someone to walk on my own. A group effort, other people are doing it, reminders, seeing other people posting their steps or what they have done for the day. That motivated and pushed me (FP31).

Everyone was active on the group and it helped me to walk which was part of my daily planning¹² (FP34).

Being part of this group was really encouraging (FP39).

These participants agreed that the group and its members performed a motivational role when it came to encouraging them. The motivation was part of the encouragement, which led to the engagement and interaction. Participants felt that some type of interaction was a factor in their engagement when it came to the interaction with others. Participants FP24, FP28 (age 40-49), and FP50 (age 30-39) commented that, although the personal interaction was limited, it was still useful. Despite the limited interpersonal engagement, they felt a sense of increased well-being while walking as a group. At the same time, these three participants felt that the members of the group should have done more to encourage participants by being more active on the group:

So even it was not a physical interaction all the time ... there was some. So we all motivated each other (FP24).

[Interaction] was helpful. However I feel the encouragement from different members could be better mostly it was just posting (FP28).

The interaction with the group was great. It motivates you to wish for a better person and to realise that you can achieve a goal¹³ (FP50).

¹² Translation from Afrikaans to English.

¹³ Translation from Afrikaans to English.

These three participants concluded that motivation and inspiration were greatly enhanced when people communicated with each other. If participants wished to enhance their health, encouragement was crucial when it came to helping them broaden the parameters of the impact of walking. As a result of the encouragement, a sense of belonging developed.

6.5 A sense of association and belonging

A walk is a journey into the unknown, a chance to explore unlimited possibilities. A sense of belonging was produced while exploring unlimited possibilities. In this way, with reference to the group participants felt a sense of belonging (cf. Koyama, 1979). It is natural for human beings to wish and experience a sense of association or belonging. Walking and hiking are two of the most popular recreational activities that people enjoy. However, the type of walking participants were engaged in became in a sense exclusive. Some walkers wanted it to be exclusive to the WhatsApp group. Walking became centred on status, though this fostered a sense of community (see Chapter 3).

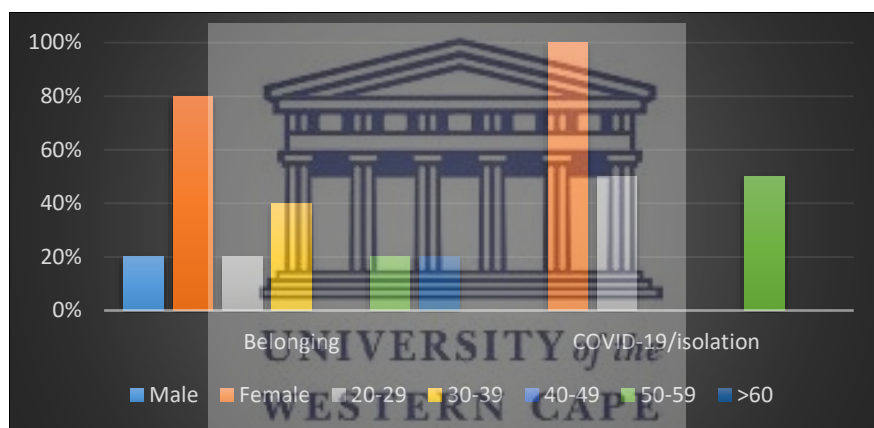


Figure 6.4: Sense of association: Belonging

Figure 6.4 indicates an association between belonging and COVID-19 isolation among female and male participants of various ages.

Participants who formed part of the WhatsApp group felt a sense of association and belonging. Being part of the group made them feel as though they belonged. As a result, they were motivated, where walking was something they looked forward to every day. Experiencing a sense of belonging altered their life (FP1, FP24, FP29, FP31, and MP25, age >60), despite the fact that some group members did not make everyone feel that they belonged. However, overall, most of the participants were of the opinion that there was a general sense of belonging:

Yes, definitely, belonging to this group created a sense of belonging. It motivated me to walk consistently and I felt I did not want to disappoint the group (FP1).

So joining this group, I feel a bit of sense of belonging (FP24).

Yes, 100%. I can truly say that I feel a sense of belonging in the group, we might not see each other physically but the virtual interaction knowing we are in this together allows for the comrade (FP29).

Yes, I enjoyed being part of a 10 000 steps group, so that created a sense of belonging for me. For me it was something I looked forward to every day, completing my steps. Definitely motivational and sense of belonging. To belong to something important and it was worth my time and it changed my life (FP31).

I feel that I do not belong in a group. I am a long distance walker and groups are normally not for long distance walkers. I do not walk 10 or 21kms; I walk long distances and have received medals for my long distances¹⁴ (MP25).

These participants confirmed that the group provided a sense of belonging, although MP25 preferred walking alone and, as such, suggested that he did not so much require a sense of belonging. In the course of COVID-19, a sense of belonging became crucial for the majority of participants. When they interacted with the group, they felt that they were not alone. FP1, FP24, FP29, and FP31 desired experiencing a sense of belonging because COVID was the source of their isolation, and WhatsApp¹⁵ allowed them to be a part of a group. It was impossible for participants to participate in normal activities because of the COVID restrictions. The group provided the necessary sense of belonging to participants, as expressed in the words of FP1 and FP24:

COVID isolated so many of us and the camaraderie shared in this amongst the walkers was good for me as a person (P1).

So like I was saying COVID restricted us from participating, uhhh how can I say, going on with our normal routine our usual daily activities was taken away. So yes the walking group brought some sense of belonging (P24).

¹⁴ Translation from Afrikaans to English.

¹⁵ The WhatsApp group and the walking group were the same group. WhatsApp was used to communicate with participants.

Being a part of a group during COVID produced a sense of belonging, as stated by FP1 and FP24. This sense of belonging made the sustenance of well-being a goal. Furthermore, for FP24 and FP31 the sense of association gave them purpose and inspired them to walk every day:

[I] felt a sense of belonging. We had a purpose (P24).

Belonging to the group was a sense of belonging for me. For me it was something I looked forward to every day, completing my steps (P31).

A sense of association or belonging, as indicated by FP24 and FP31, contributed to their well-being. Because of the goal-oriented nature of the walk, each participant created his or her own journey. The journey became more than just a walk: it became a path of discovery.

6.6 Purpose of a personalised journey

The importance of a personalised route is that it enhances the walking experience with the environment (cf. Bassett, 2004). Even as this is the end goal of a personalised walk, the journey to get there becomes more than a mere walk. Participants walk to experience physical, mental and spiritual well-being. A walk, as claimed by Messenger, is all about the journey itself (cf. Messenger, 2017). Exploring the unknown is the essence of walking. The essence of the walk was to discover one's inner self, one's individuality. Walking in this manner necessitates discipline. Walkers dictate a walking culture. Transportation and a kind of enjoyment are among the core values of walking (see Chapter 2).

The participants' viewpoints on the significance of a personalised walking journey are indicated in Figure 6.4. The figure also illustrates the female to male ratio in terms of developing well-being, walking objectives, and hiking's impact on their person as well as its value for their soul.

When it comes to the way in which participants understood the goal of a customised journey, mental well-being, new-found discovery, activeness, nature, as well as body and spirit were found to be the fundamental features as related to walking.

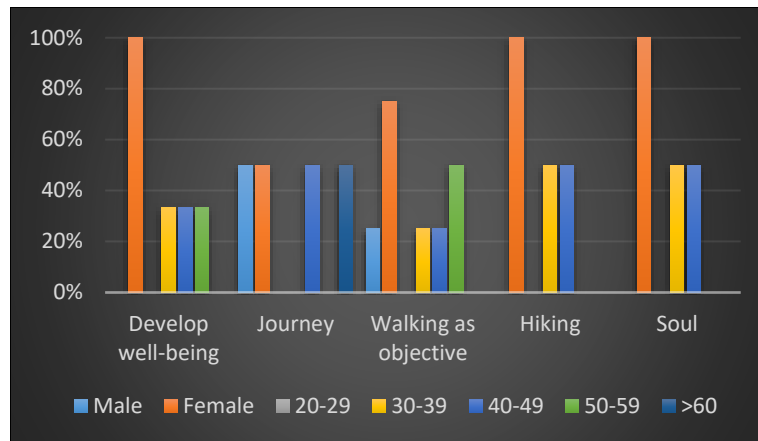


Figure 6.4: Purpose of a personalised journey

Participants perceived their personalised journey as an undertaking to improve their health and mental well-being. Participants' FP1, FP22, FP23, and FP27 reflected on the purpose of their personal development and how the journey improved their health and wellness:

I wanted to improve my health and mental well-being and through this group I could manage to do this (FP1).

[I] challenge myself to improve on my health as I am experiencing some health [issues] (FP22).

My purpose for joining was to be accountable to myself as well as others for my health and fitness (FP23).

So for me it helps in terms of the community and getting healthy and I wanted to get healthier. Always I have a back issue, a spine issue. The doctor and the physio said that to walk is the only thing or one of the things that I am able to do (FP27).

As the words of these participants suggest, the objective of a personalised journey is either to improve health and emotional well-being or to explore and develop fitness. As a result of reflecting on the goal of walking as a means of improving general well-being, participants discovered new things. A personal journey, as described by MP2 (age 40-49) and FP13 (age >60), allowed participants to find open spaces while also experiencing a spiritual journey.

The initial purpose was to join a group of people who found joy in walking, discovering new things, sights and sounds, being able to experience the effects of nature, and to improve on the goals we set for ourselves (MP2).

I also walk when I need wide open spaces where I can shout out my happiness, skip and jump for joy, sharing myself with nature without fear of judgement or condemnation for behaviour that

may be deemed crazy. For me walking is a spiritual journey of renewal and confirmation of who I am in this world (FP13).

Finding new things, according to MP2 and FP23, led to their unique journeys. The personalised journey allowed them to experience unique ventures and motivated them to become physically active. These elements were seen as important parts of discovering their paths, as indicated by FP3 (age 50-59), FP27, and MP16 (age 50-59), who pursued a personal path in order to stay healthy and fit:

I just wanted to get into being active again. [It] was not easy, especially if you do not have fellow walkers with you every day and also walking in areas where you had to be vigilant (FP3).

For me it was definitely to get more active and I needed to get active and also for the motivation from everybody else (FP27).

I try to walk every afternoon and I found that it now has become much more than just a way to keep healthy and fit. It offers me the time to think, to clear my mind, revisit my priorities and re-evaluate my goals (MP16).

FP3, FP27, and MP16 made it obvious that walking became the driving force behind a personalised route in order to keep active. Keeping active contributed to their well-being. The participants' sense of well-being was also enhanced by their walks in nature, which they thoroughly enjoyed. FP8 (age 30-39) and FP9 (age 40-49) embarked on a mountain hike to discover something new about themselves, claiming the following:

Amazing people walking with you through the terrains as our aim is to get to the peak, an expression on their faces that is unexplainable but relatable. I love walking because I know I'm walking with a purpose (FP8).

Hiking is something I did not realise I needed until I started seeing a difference in myself (FP9).

It was agreed upon by the FP8 and FP9 that walking in nature helped them achieve their goals and create a unique journey. The personal walking adventure had a liberating influence on their human soul due to the goals and targets set. Walking for nourishment of the body and spirit was demonstrated by the effect of walking by FP11 (age 50-59) and P32 (age 30-39). Personal beliefs such as their faith allowed them to experience a personal journey in order to develop their spiritual well-being, as indicated in these responses:

Walking and hiking became a tool to address challenges, pain, good news, insecurities and unresolved demands. I walk to feed my body and soul. I walk to maintain my sanity. I walk because it gives me a sense of freedom, serenity and solitude (FP11).

Reflect and spend time with yourself, reflect, reflect and relax, rewind, almost. Almost as if, I found when I walk it is as if my cup gets refilled, so that I can give to my family, so that I can give to my friends, If I can put it like that. That is very important because when your cup is full you can give (FP32).

The personalised journey had a beneficial influence on participants' health and on their souls. Each of the criteria described here played a significant role in the pursuit of a personalised journey. The subsequent section focuses on the way in which walking in the outdoors amounts to a natural way to improve participants' health.

6.7 Walking in nature restores individual well-being

Attachment to one's body or physical well-being is referred to as personal well-being. Well-being is the ability to reassemble or rebuild mental capability to its maximum capacity. Plants, animals, and landscapes all form part of the natural physical world. Participants view walking in nature as a way to enjoy life without spending a lot of money. On the one hand, walking encourages living a simple life (see Chapter 2) and, on the other, it is a great way of boosting mental health (cf. Davies, 1999). People who walk in natural environments are happier than those who walk indoors (cf. Chapter 2).

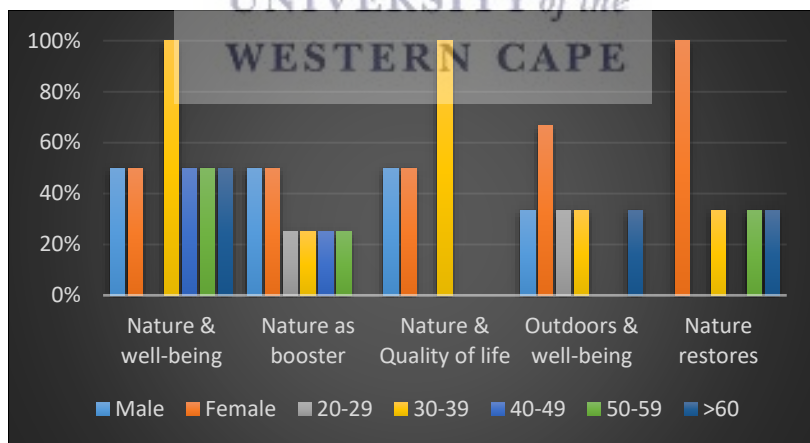


Figure 6.5: Nature restores individual well-being

The number of participants' thoughts on nature restoring individual well-being when walking is depicted in Figure 6.5 in terms of nature and well-being, nature as a stimulant, nature and

quality of life, and the influence of being outdoors on the well-being of participants, while the figure again displays the female to male ratio and the various age categories.

How participants perceived the influence of nature on their well-being differed from person to person. Happiness, mental well-being, and overall well-being were seen as restoring individual well-being amongst participants. Participants MP2 and FP13 experienced joy and happiness while walking in nature. This could be linked to the fact that they were walking in open spaces, as they themselves suggested:

The initial purpose was to join a group of people who found joy in walking, discovering new things, sights and sounds, being able to experience the effects of nature, and to improve on the goals we set for ourselves (MP2).

I also walk when I need wide open spaces where I can shout out my happiness, skip and jump for joy, sharing myself with nature without fear of judgement (FP13).

These two participants affirmed that walking in nature restored one's sense of balance and well-being. Some participants also alluded to mental health. Participants FP6 (age 50-59), FP10 (age 30-39), MP19 (age 40-49), and MP38 (age 20-29) saw walking in nature as a mental stimulant that contributed to their well-being. Walking in nature, they believed, was a means to improve their general quality of life. They felt that nature provided them with a space for cleansing their minds, and agreed that being in nature placed them at peace and kept their minds clear from pressing situations:

[Walking] offers a good mental stimulator and relaxes the mind, which enables me to deal with daily challenges. Especially walking in nature, it is a personal journey (FP6).

Whenever I've hiked a trail, I always return home with a renewed appreciation for mother nature and her abundance. So in essence hiking improved my life (FP10).

Being out in nature provides me the space to feel healed, psychologically and emotionally (MP19).

I've always felt one with nature. It puts me at ease, and it takes my mind away from the various stresses faced each day (MP38).

Regardless of age or gender, these participants agreed that taking a walk in nature boosted their mental well-being. Mental well-being increased their quality of life. Intriguingly, being in nature and experiencing beautiful scenes during COVID gave FP10 and MP50 the impression

that COVID was not real. They saw quality of life as nature to intervening and improving their individual well-being:

[Walking in] nature gives a sense of abundance. So in essence hiking improved my life (FP10).

Yes, when I walk I feel everything is normal and it makes me feel COVID does not exist but rather focuses on good things like nature's beautiful images¹⁶ (P50).

Nature walks therefore boosted quality of life for FP10 and MP50. There is evidence that walking, whether indoors or outdoors, has a good effect on participants' health. In contrast to MP21 (age>60), FP24 and FP27 viewed walking indoors and outside to be complementary activities. They suggested that being able to walk outside was beneficial to their health:

So yes, a lot of walking took place – outside in our yard and indoors (MP21).

[When I move] my steps start counting, to the bathroom, whether I take a walk outside. I take the app to walk on the road (FP24).

Being able to get outside and see the world and because you are so secluded in your home to keep safe that you forget to experience other things as well (P27).

These participants agreed that, whether or not they walked indoors or outside, walking had an impact on their overall well-being. Therefore, walking improved their quality of life and general well-being. Participants rated the peacefulness of nature as an element that improved their well-being (FP11, FP13, and FP29). The participants recognised that they felt better after walking in open spaces. Participants' well-being improved by interacting with nature:

I could walk in the mountains, feel the sun on my skin, talk to God, listen to the peacefulness of nature and feel free (FP11).

I also walk when I need wide open spaces where I can shout out my happiness. Sharing me with nature [is rewarding] (FP13).

The interaction with nature [allowed] me to soak in the fresh air [felt good] (FP29).

FP11, FP13, and FP29 clearly indicate that nature restores a person's well-being. A single step can serve a number of purposes. A person's mood, enjoyment, and overall well-being are dictated by the sound of a person's footsteps.

¹⁶ Translation from Afrikaans to English.

6.8 Hiking: The sound of a person's footsteps

Every action is determined by the rhythm and pace of a person's footstep. A footstep conveys a story about the individual, and it tells a story about the footstep's journey. When one is walking for a long period and listening intently to the footsteps and the motions one makes, it feels as if one is outside of time and space (cf. Watson, 2006). Stepping forward creates a relationship of mutual understanding (cf. Solnit, 2001). As a result, walking becomes a kind of self-discovery tune. In walking, there are no rules or restrictions. It does not discriminate against age or gender. In addition, it is not restricted to any particular faith or race (cf. Chapter 2).

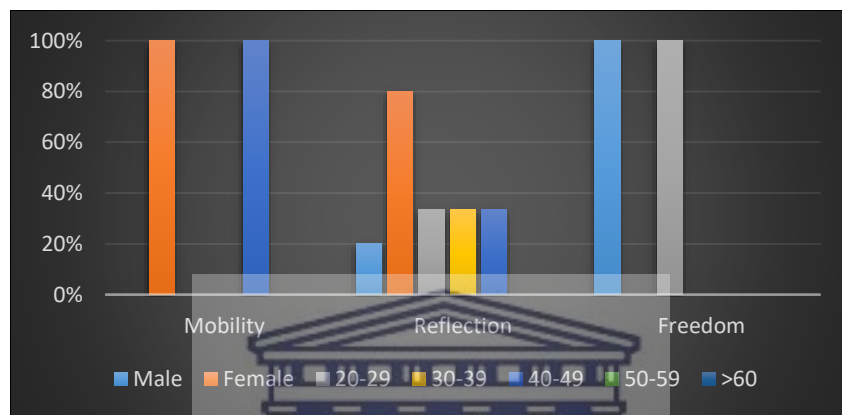


Figure 6.6: Hiking: The Sound of a person's footsteps

Figure 6.6 shows the number of participants' thoughts on the effect of the sound of a person's footsteps. The female and male ratios within the various age categories depict mobility, reflection, and freedom.

The sound of a person's footsteps was regarded by participants as mobility, introspection, or a link between where you walked and the journey of the walk. Walking signifies a sense of liberation. In the opinion of FP9, the sound of a footstep is accompanied by movement, which indicates its influence:

Hiking is something I did not realise I needed until I started seeing a difference in myself (FP9).

For this participant, a footstep is associated with hiking. Reflection or connection, the qualities associated with the sound of a footstep for FP9 by hiking in the mountains, also dictated the type of reflection or connection experienced by participants FP10, MP20 (age 20-29), and FP22. They detected a direct correlation between their footsteps and the type of relationship

they enjoyed with family members. A connection with each other when they heard a footstep was experienced as follows:

Hiking also gives you that time to reflect, reconnect and take time for yourself when life gets too busy. So in essence hiking improved my life. It also improved my relationship with my husband (FP10).

Hiking brings and connects people together in the most mysterious/weirdest ways, you could be hiking a trail with a group of strangers or people (MP20).

[WhatsApp] created a platform for us to do the things we love (walking/hiking) together as a group (but individually) (FP22).

As a result of the reflection among and connection within the group FP10, MP20, and FP22 were able to hear footsteps. When they heard the sound of footsteps, they experienced a sense of liberation. The three participants agreed that the sound of footsteps presented the feeling of freedom, tranquillity, and seclusion. Participants MP20 and MP38 stated that demographics did not matter when one experienced the sound of a footstep. Moreover, the sensation of liberation that came from the sound of a footstep was not confined to a particular age, status, position, education, or background. When participants were walking or hiking in the mountains, demographics were unimportant. In the words of two participants:

Your background is [unimportant], hiking doesn't care how much money you have, hiking doesn't care how educated you are, hiking doesn't care what age you are (MP20).

[It] doesn't matter what position you hold at the company you work for, hiking will always remind you that you are but flesh and bone and no different from the person walking next to you. With this in mind I've realised that hiking has the power to do what the year 95 did for us (MP38).

These responses demonstrate that age, gender, and position did not play a role in the positive experience that the sound of a footstep caused. The sound created a diversion and for the moment, and nothing else mattered, only the effect of the footstep that transferred healing and cleansing.

6.9 Therapy for isolation

To address the participants' ideas on walking as a form of isolation therapy, a few words come to mind. Loneliness and isolation are linked to a decline in physical activity among older persons and those living alone. There has been minimal investigation of the measures available

to protect the mental health of those who have been instructed to isolate, socially isolate, or hide during the COVID-19 outbreak. COVID-19's effects on mental health and ways to counteract them have prompted a need for high-quality research (Kmietowicz, 2020). To combat feelings of isolation and loneliness, researchers such as Garden *et al.* (2018) examined a variety of intervention strategies. A few examples of these interventions are social facilitation interventions, psychological therapies, health and social care provision, animal interventions, befriending interventions, and leisure and skill-development activities. Isolation therapy, as used in this project, will resort under the rubric of leisure/ skill development. The focus of leisure activities are interventions largely geared at teaching participants on topics such as social isolation/ loneliness or health and well-being (Williams *et al.*, 2021:4). Walking is a method that serves as an intervention in isolation therapy. This brings about a focus on the walking method as a leisure activity for addressing isolation during COVID-19. Walking is both a remedy and an intervention for addressing isolation (Marselle *et al.*, 2013).

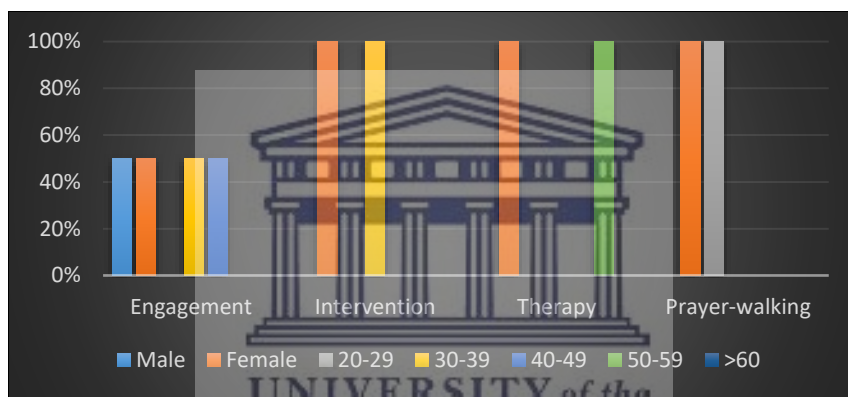


Figure 6.7: Therapy for isolation

Figure 6.7 depicts female and male participants dealing with isolation therapy by using various methods such as engagement, intervention, therapy, and prayer-walking. The percentage of females and males in each age group is again shown.

Participants MP19 and FP27 showed that interaction with other participants was helpful when it came to addressing their isolation and loneliness. Intervention emerged as a result of participants' enthusiasm and commitment. They could identify with one another within the group. On the WhatsApp platform participants accepted that they were not alone thanks to the walking initiative. It was not always safe for them to walk alone, but walking with someone or their dogs allowed them to participate in the activities, and this helped them understand the significance of being active, as reflected in the following responses:

[Walking] in addition provides me with an opportunity to engage in meaningful conversation with fellow walkers who I often discover go through similar challenges as I do, and this helps me to understand that I am not alone (MP19).

At times the only difficult thing I found was walking alone. If I would walk alone it wasn't always safe but I found I could do that when I took my dog with me and went for walk (FP27).

MP19 and FP27 evidently saw engagement as a way to combat feelings of isolation and loneliness. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it became obvious that group participation was critical for countering isolation. According to FP29 and FP32, being part of an organisational initiative was important, because it provided consistency and encouragement. This consistency and encouragement meant that group treatment became a therapy against isolation. The goal of walking with the group was to do better. Belonging to a group made sense for FP29 and FP32, as it addressed the isolation induced by COVID-19:

I felt it was harder doing it [walking] alone or staying consistent. With the group it encourages me to go forth and not disappoint my members. I've become consistent with that drive (FP29).

As I mentioned in the beginning, the purpose for me was to control my sugar levels. That was the reason why I joined the group and I find that doing something collectively is better than doing it alone and you are accountable for what the rules are in the group. So when you are walking alone I can easily say I am tired, I am done for the day but being part of a group (FP32).

Walking thus became a treatment for the self and the inner self. As another participant, FP30, claimed, walking during COVID helped address many aspects of her life and the fact that she was alone kept her sane. People were unable to easily move around during the initial lockdown. The participant's loneliness was alleviated by joining a WhatsApp walking group. The walk itself turned out to be therapy for her even when she was walking by herself. In her own words:

Walking during COVID has given me some different perceptions of life and has pushed you in a corner and you are in a corner alone. So walking was sort of my outlet clearing my mind and also doing some introspection about myself and as a person staying alone. It does a lot for me, personally (FP30).

Introspection therefore went hand in hand with praying. This was confirmed by participant FP44 (age 40-49), who is walking routines included prayer-walking. Even though she was walking alone, she understood that her Creator was right there with her and that she was not walking alone after all.

I'm currently in Yzerfontein and did a beach walk by myself. As I prayed while walking, I told myself I'll stop at 5k steps and turn back. When I reached the point I found this cross in front of me. It reminded me that even though I think I'm walking alone, I'm not. God is with me (FP44).

Participants' well-being was boosted by the different ways in which they engaged in combat with isolation. Camaraderie and friendship flourished, as mentioned in the WhatsApp group. For some participants, the WhatsApp group was a lifeline during COVID-19.

6.10 Virtual friendship and companionship

The WhatsApp group created a one-of-a-kind link amongst the participants, establishing virtual friendship and companionship. The participants' engagement in the WhatsApp group was a daily occurrence, creating a strong sense of connection. The small WhatsApp community that the group developed during COVID-19 was crucial in terms of a support system for fellow participants. This confirms the argument of Chengalur-Smith and Ran (2014:585) that increased online outlets for support exchange, as well as fostering companionship activities in any virtual support group, could lead to increased engagement in support exchange, resulting in improved health outcomes.

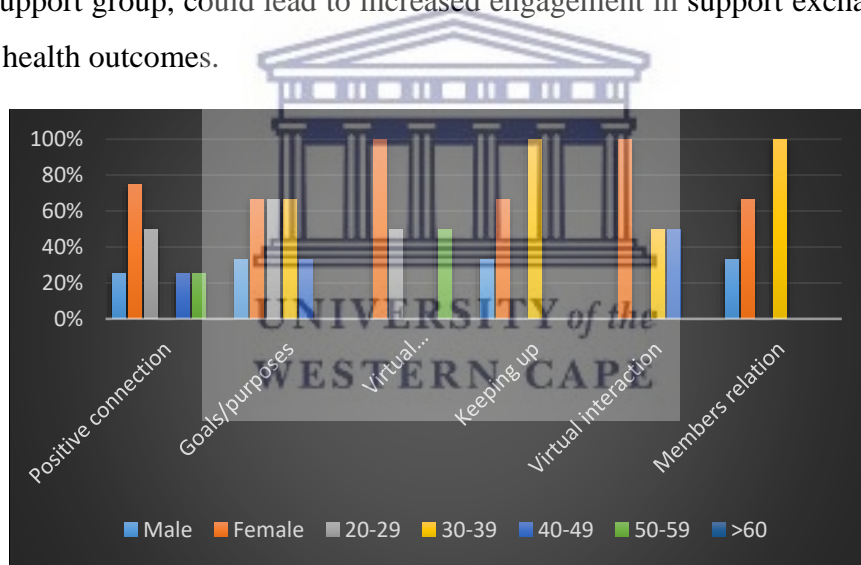


Figure 6.8: Virtual friendship and companionship

Figure 6.8 illustrates the link between virtual friendship and companionship and participation. As regards the WhatsApp group, the graph demonstrates either a correlation between or a dispersion among female and male members and their responses about the different attributes of virtual friendship and companionship. The figure reflects the various age groups as well as six components or attributes of virtual friendship and companionship: positive connections, setting goals and purposes, virtual acknowledgement, keeping up with the group, virtual interaction, and mode of mutual interaction.

Participants FP1, FP22, FP24, and MP51 recognised positive interaction and indicated that the WhatsApp group provided a purpose for their lives. According to these participants, the good contact with the group enthused and inspired them to exercise and get out of bed. The WhatsApp group became very important to the participants when the possibilities for interaction were minimal and individuals struggled to function. Four respondents considered the positive engagement with the group to be satisfying and thought the interaction in the WhatsApp group was positive:

Interacting with the group, the motivation and inspiration to walk every day was good for me as a person. Some days I did not feel like getting out of bed but the inspiration from the group motivated me to get out of bed and walk. At times I felt depressed and negative but walking and being part of this group kept my sanity (FP1).

Interaction between participants are minimal except from the Group Admin who would post a motivation every morning. Just to encourage everyone to take it one-step at a time (FP22)

So the interaction with the group was actually nice (FP24).

The interaction in the group is really good, all the goals and rules are set out perfectly (MP51).

These four participants all agreed that one of the benefits of virtual friendship and companionship in the WhatsApp group was pleasant contact. The pleasant encounter set the bar for participants' ambitions and objectives, which was motivating amongst these four participants as well as in the WhatsApp group in general. MP2, FP27, and FP31 experienced the specific goals, aims, and purpose that were set each day as a form of group understanding, which served to help them achieve their personal goals. They were of the opinion that being able to fulfil their goals was because they were members of the WhatsApp group. These three adhered to the goals and objectives that the group established for themselves and expressed it as follows:

The initial purpose was to join a group of people who found joy in walking, discovering new things, sights and sounds, being able to experience the effects of nature, and to improve on the goals we set for ourselves (MP2).

I did so many steps for the day and then you realise I am only on 900 steps and then realise I need to get out there or seeing pictures of people doing so many steps (FP27).

Yes, I enjoyed being part of a 10 000 steps group, so that created a sense of belonging for me. For me it was something I looked forward to every day, completing my steps (FP31).

It became clear from these responses that the WhatsApp group achieved its goals and objectives. The attribute of virtual acknowledgement was a perfect fit for the participants' goals and objectives, which furthermore engendered a sense of belonging. FP3 and FP24 discovered that they appreciated being virtually congratulated, which stimulated and inspired them. They concurred that the virtual acknowledgement of the group made them feel like they belonged and stated their responses as follows:

People I haven't met before gave me a virtual pat on the back. Never mind how many steps you have done, they would congratulate you (FP3).

You could no longer join your social groups or go out to the groups or various things that made you feel part of something else. So even if it was not a physical interaction all the time, there was some. So we all motivated each other (FP24).

They both thought that virtual acknowledgements were acceptable because these served to motivate and inspire them. They were encouraged to keep up with the group as a result of these virtual acknowledgements. Participants FP12, FP29, and FP30 mentioned that keeping up with the group was difficult at times, but the group motivation inspired them to continue. The motivation that they experienced led them to keep up with the group, which they conceded to be challenging at first. In their own words:

All this together with the fact that I was struggling to keep up with the group, was making me wonder whether this was a good idea (FP12).

In addition, [walking the amount of steps] it challenges oneself to push even on days that you maybe have no energy. They held me accountable for my commitment (FP29).

The WhatsApp group in the beginning for me was challenging because I don't really follow the rules that go with it. But indirectly it pushed me to think that I can do more. When I was not in the group I would walk the way I feel but now I am in a routine and it sort of disciplined me (FP30).

FP12, FP29, and FP30 confirmed that keeping up with the group was a challenge when it came to interaction, goals, purpose, virtual acknowledgement of virtual friendship, and companionship. The dialogue within the WhatsApp group was deemed meaningful by FP32 and FP33. They were at ease in the group and felt comfortable meeting and interacting with the other members, as expressed in the following responses:

[I] was relating to the people in the group because everybody was walking in the group and everybody's reason for walking was obviously different. But the mere fact that everyone was walking means that we all had something in common (FP32).

Yes, I did enjoy meeting everyone with our walk in Blouberg, chatting to people I do not know and meeting people I don't know. Yes I did feel part of the group after I met you guys (FP33).

They agreed that they could relate to the other WhatsApp group members. It is evident that interaction played a crucial role in the group. Participants FP29, FP34 and MP50 confirmed that virtual engagement was a form of interaction that allowed participants to establish some sense of camaraderie. Virtual connection pushed the participants to walk every day. The engagement in the WhatsApp group was motivating, and the participants felt compelled to do better and achieve their objectives:

Yes, 100%, I can truly say that I feel a sense of belonging in the group, we might not see each other physically but the virtual interaction knowing we are in this together allows for the camaraderie (FP29).

The group on WhatsApp motivated me. Everyone was active on the group and it helped me¹⁷ (FP34).

The interaction on the WhatsApp group was great. It motivated you to do better as a person and to realise that you can achieve a goal¹⁸ (MP50).

It is clear that FP29, FP34, and MP50 all agreed that virtual connection was possible and pleasant, and that it played a role in virtual friendship and camaraderie amongst participants. The virtual contact was critical for completing the steps taken by the participants.

6.11 The process of accomplished steps

The process of completing steps was found to be related to a variety of features and attributes. The outcome fulfilled a purpose that influenced the participants' overall well-being. Walking one foot in front of the other, one-step at a time, is a step-by-step procedure. The individual felt out of his or her mind at times. After a long walk, they listened closely to the person's footsteps and actions as if nothing else made sense. Their footsteps lacked rhythm, as if they were out of time (cf. Watson, 2006:289).

¹⁷ Translation from Afrikaans to English.

¹⁸ Translation from Afrikaans to English.

For the purposes of this study, the process of completing steps includes the number of steps participants completed, the contribution this made to health on the participants, the benefits of walking , acknowledgement by the participants of how this facilitated targets and goals, and the encouragement “to do” more steps.

Table 6.1: Personalised COVID-trail: November 2020

	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3
	9 – 15 NOVEMBER	16 – 22 NOVEMBER	23 – 30 NOVEMBER
FP1	97385	94350	71950
MP 2	44307	18054	0
FP3	40932	41693	0
FP4	34236	40216	0
FP5	28119	11547	32057
FP6	20682	36509	28872
FP7	15646	0	0
FP8	11844	21733	32616
FP9	10011	0	0

Table 1 shows the number of steps each participant walked during the first, second, and third week of the November 2020 personalised route.

Table 6.2: Personalised COVID-trail: December 2020 – January 2021

	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3
	29 DECEMBER 2020 – 4 JANUARY 2021	5 – 11 JANUARY 2021	12 – 18 JANUARY 2021
FP10	101441	89538	103189
FP11	70003	49679	44686
FP12	79513	8721	0
FP13	71976	56228	35835
FP14	23539	17264	3910
MP15	103219	74239	95000
MP16	5002	0	0
MP17	96207	76883	65250
MP18	89157	70952	77365
MP19	48269	31746	20011
MP20	95947	83177	76542
MP21	58710	21816	2705
FP22	45875	28520	18958
FP23	22615	28703	37765
FP24	8311	0	0
MP25	0	7073	20095

Table 2 shows the number of steps each participant walked during the first, second, and third weeks of the December 2020 and January 2021 personalised route.

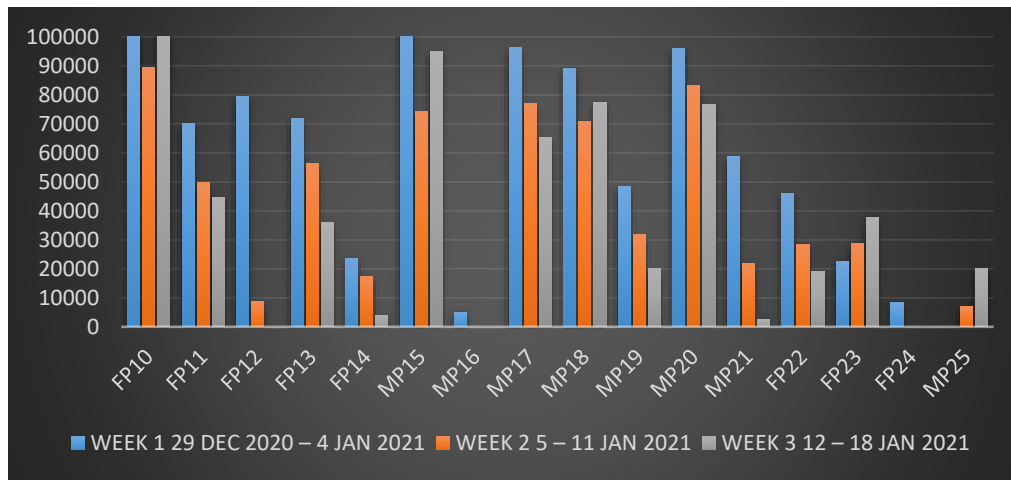


Figure 6.9: Personalised COVID-trail: December, 2020 – January 2021

Figure 6.9 depicts a personalised COVID trail walked between 29 December 2020 and 18 January 2021, which is aligned here with the number of steps walked as recorded in Tables 1 and 2. Data were collected and recorded during this period, in which 16 participants took part. Participants completed between 0 and 105 000 steps.

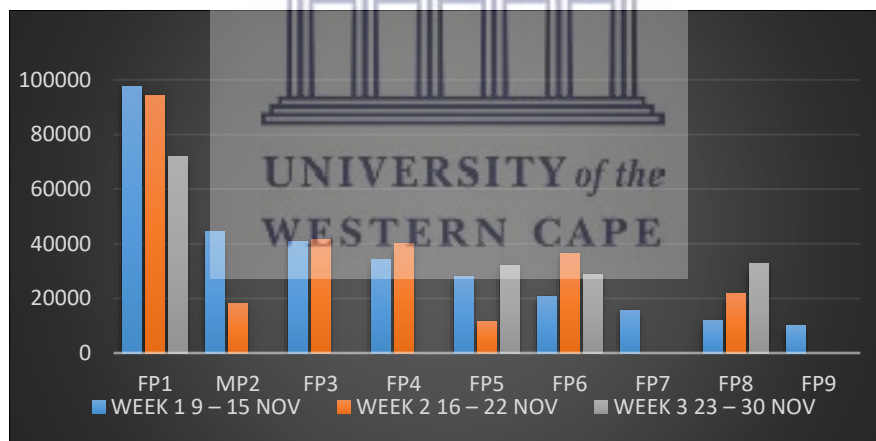


Figure 6.10: Personalised COVID-trail: November 2020

Figure 6.10 depicts a personalised COVID trail walked between November 9 and 30 November 2020. Data were collected and recorded during this period, in which nine participants took part. Participants completed between 0 and 100 000 steps. Table 1 reflects the actual number of steps participants walked, where Figure 6.10 presents the number of steps walked among the participants. The figure clearly shows consistency when it comes to the different weeks during which walking occurred.

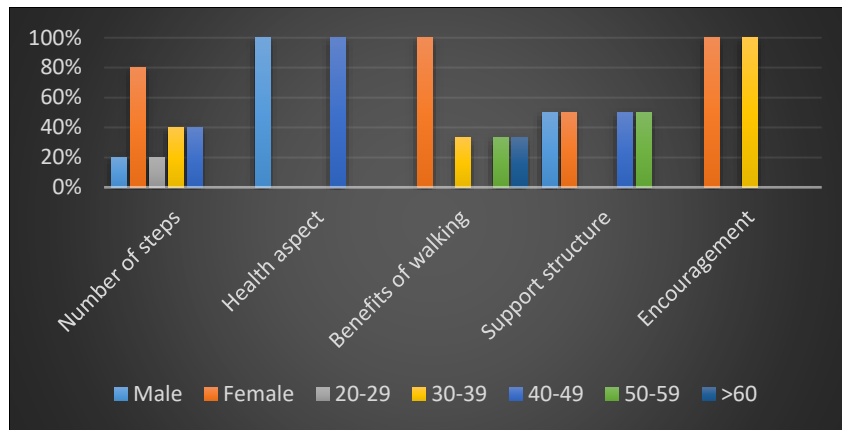


Figure 6.11: The process of accomplished steps

The series of completed phases is depicted in Figure 6.11. It explains the relation between the number of steps taken, the health advantages of walking, the support structure experienced by participants, and encouragement received. With a view to elucidating the influence of the completed steps on participants, the figure represents the various age groups as well as the gender ratio. Participants MP2, FP12, FP22, FP24, and MP25 saw the number of steps they completed as a process. The number of steps became part of the process of obtaining the distance covered and completing the number of steps became advantageous, since participants would congratulate each other. The number of steps contributed to the process of completing steps and encouraged participants to either walk the same number of steps or do better. Respondents thought they reached a point where they walked more than the required or average number of steps. They realised they could do more, whilst the effect of the number of steps on the participant's body motivated them to attain their set objectives. They portrayed the process as follows:

The steps and kilometres are only the effect of a cause, due to walking one takes one-step at a time, and a certain number of steps leads to a certain amount because of the being covered (MP2).

After doing a total of 22 583 steps in total, I thought I was going to be in a lot of pain, but to my surprise I felt so amazing (FP12).

[I] was motivated by whatever number of steps/kilometres the other group members achieved and it motivates you to either achieve the same amount or better it (FP22).

You didn't realise that you could walk so many steps and the average number of steps you do for the day. You realised that you could do more than what you are actually doing (FP24).

I'm more consistent in my desire to achieve the steps and kilometres. Physically my body was changing and that encouraged me more to achieve my set amounts or go beyond that. It has been a blessing and I'm so thankful to have joined the group (MP25).

These five participants wanted to make it clear that the number of steps completed was part of a process. The significance of focusing on health played a significant role in the accomplishment of the steps. The accomplishment formed part of the process, as confirmed by MP2. MP2 saw health as a benefit of walking and the influence on the mind and body as part of the process of obtaining the number of steps. In his words:

The true benefit of walking is the health of mind and body which is a result of the number of steps and kilometres one covers (MP2).

This underlines that a healthy body promotes a healthy mind, while a good mind improves a person's quality of life. The advantages of walking are limitless. MP2 and FP45 claimed that the advantage of walking and the effect on the mind and body became part of the process of obtaining the number of steps. They concurred that walking and stepping up defined them. Walking aided their personas:

The true benefit of walking is the health of mind and body, which is a result of the number of steps and kilometres one covers (MP2).

The type of walking I do is more than the act on foot. It defines the person that I am. Every day my kms/steps is a personal achievement (FP45).

Both parties therefore agreed that walking was good as to the process of completing steps, and the group members agreed that celebrating achievement was crucial. FP3, FP12, and FP26 (female, >60 years old) discovered that acknowledgement by other participants and congratulating the individual pushed them to continue the journey of steps. Accomplishing the targeted number of steps became advantageous, since other participants would congratulate them. The appreciation expressed by the other participants was heartening. The quantity of walking that they were capable of prompted them to do more. They stated the following:

Never mind how many steps you have done, they would congratulate you (FP3).

I thought I was going to be in a lot of pain, but to my surprise I felt so amazing (FP12).

The one helps the other and the one encourages the other. You do not have to say anything, you look at the number of steps, it encourages you to do more (FP26).

These participants were sure that being acknowledged by the other walkers in the group had a significant impact on their ability to complete steps in the walking process. Being acknowledged became an encouragement to take more steps. During the steps challenge, participants in the WhatsApp group discussed their total amount of steps, which offered encouragement to them. Doing more steps and being inspired in the group was a source of motivation for FP27 and FP31. COVID-19 and the lockdown encouraged participants to become more active in order to improve their health. Taking additional steps became a part of the participants' everyday routine in order to improve their well-being. They said:

I need to get out there or see pictures of people doing so many steps. For example, one day a [fellow walker] posted 10 000 steps and then you see people can actually do 16 000 steps and if someone else can make that you can also try to do that. It is not always possible but it was motivating me to try harder and do more steps (FP27).

During lockdown, I would do my normal activities and spend an hour or two in the late evenings when I had more time, just walking in the garden, the front garden and the back garden. I am not able in my area to walk around the block or anything like that. But when I was back at work most of my steps I could do at school [work], so 5000-6000 steps were done at school (FP31).

Taking more steps was encouraged in one way or another among participants. This incentive led participants to continually pursue the number of steps obtained by all WhatsApp group participants. The number of steps completed was not only a number, but also an execution of effort.

6.12 Number of steps: not only a number but an execution of effort

During COVID-19, a study on step tracking was undertaken, with a South African perspective on self-observation tools for improving walking. The study found that a 14-day quarantine period was effective for the study. The research was limited to moderate-to-vigorous home-based/indoor workout films with intermittent stepping that were curated online. The workout included continuous aerobic activity, high-intensity interval training, and body-weight resistance training. A smartphone app was saved on a cloud-based service (Myzone Ltd., Isle of Man). Participants' personal iPhones were used to record the number of steps walked per day and the time spent taking these by using the iPhone Health application (Gradidge and Kruger, 2020:2).

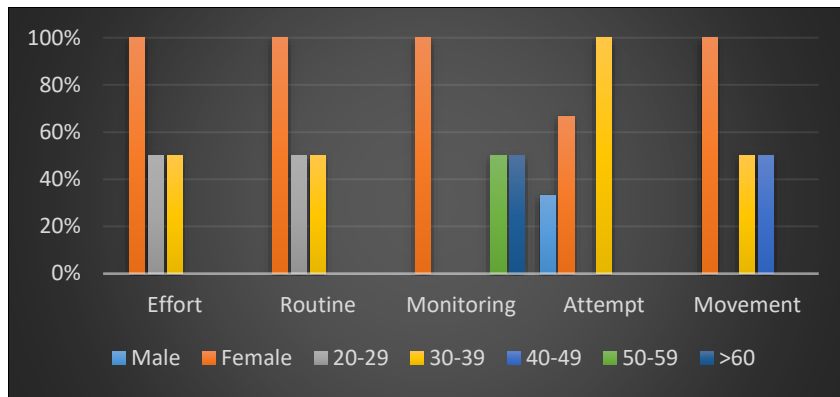


Figure 6.12: Number of steps as an execution of effort

Figure 6.12 depicts the relationship between the number of steps taken and the effort, routine, monitoring, attempt, and movement required to take them. The figure depicts the various age groups as well as the gender ratio in order to understand the number of steps in terms of an execution effort.

The number of steps taken by individuals comprised features such as effort, routine, monitoring, attempting, and movement. FP24 and FP31 viewed the effort they put into achieving their steps as surprising. They were surprised by their capabilities when they put more effort into achieving their steps. The participants perceived their number of steps to involve an effort to drive themselves and extend their boundaries as spurred on by group participation.

At the end of the day you were so surprised by your capabilities. You didn't realise that you could walk so many steps and the average number of steps you do for the day. You realised that you could do more than what you are actually doing (FP24).

A group effort, other people are doing it, reminders, seeing other people posting their steps or what they have done for the day. That motivated and pushed me. To do something active (FP31).

They both discussed the way in which the effort of stepping up resulted in a positive outcome. To obtain unexpected results, they had to push themselves to stretch their boundaries and step outside of their comfort zone. The effort became a part of the participants' routine. They further observed that, because of the set routine in walking, the number of steps achieved and completed exceeded the number of steps posted. They admitted that, because they were part of an arrangement, they felt forced to complete their steps. Their daily walk became more constant as a result of the routine. They came to an agreement:

We had to post our steps every day. So there was, how I can put this now, basically a routine, you getting into a routine” (FP24).

It became part of my routine, I wanted to achieve my steps and kilometres daily. When I felt off on rainy days or I was just exhausted, my mind was so programmed to tell my body it needs to walk (FP29).

FP24 and FP29 therefore agreed that having a routine helped them be more consistent in their efforts to complete their required steps. The monitoring of the relevant procedures was routinely recognised. Therefore, they viewed walking and stepping up as part of monitoring to see where they were at in a given moment, and they occasionally checked to see the number of steps walked. Both observed monitoring the number of steps they walked to be part of completing the required steps for the day. To use their own words:

When I get to a certain point during the day I would check my steps, then I realise I have done more than what I needed or not. It might not be the case, I need to walk more. So I would then walk more or walk around in the yard (FP24).

You do not have to say anything, you look at the number of steps. It encourages you to do more (FP26).

Monitoring was viewed as essential to the execution of the needed procedures. The execution procedure resulted in participants trying their utmost to step up to that which had been agreed upon by the next discussion. Monitoring formed part of the motivation. Participants FP27, FP32, and MP35 felt that the trend set by some of the participants motivated them to go harder and do their best. It was difficult to keep up at times, but the group’s urge inspired them to strive for more and complete more steps. Participants believed that trying to reach the number of steps was part of the process. They suggested that being held accountable was the driving force behind their success. The rules introduced made it easier to comply with this and they tried to achieve the required steps every day. They came to the following conclusion:

The challenge is not always possible but it was motivating me to try harder and do more steps (FP27).

So, if you’re walking by yourself, you may easily say, “I’m tired, I’m done for the day”. But being a part of a group, where the rules state that you must walk 10,000 steps each day, pushed me and held me accountable to at least try to meet the 10,000 step goal every day (FP32).

I try every day to achieve at least my target of 10 000 steps¹⁹ (MP35).

It is clear that, regardless of age or gender, these participants were urged by the WhatsApp group to do their best towards meeting the requisite number of steps. Participants had to move more, be more active, and step up in order to complete more steps. The following section confirms that moving is part of the requirement for participating in a steps challenge. FP27 and FP49 (age 40-49) agreed that moving to meet the required steps constituted a part of attaining steps. This was not just confined to moving outside, but was also extended to movement within the ambit of the process of execution. Every step was counted and confirmed by participants within the group, and whatever the person had to do to attain it was pursued. The participants' practice of exercising their body in any way or shape set the bar for being accountable around completing their steps. They confirmed this as follows:

I used to take the boys to the park every day as part of my walking routine. I even recorded myself walking. I'd [walk] do it in my living room since I'd still be getting my steps and walking. Even though it wasn't outside, I was still moving (FP27).

[My] goal is to move my body in every way possible... so having a daily step goal and a system of accountability helped me (FP49).

FP27 and FP49 positively confirmed that movement played an important part in stepping up to meet the required steps and more. The completion of the number of steps allowed them to find time to reflect on their overall quality of life and well-being.

6.13 Time to reflect or/ and follow

One's perception of time is altered since one is always moving and adjusting as one moves (cf. Watson, 2006:289). Walking creates time (cf. Lucas, 2008) and is not time specific (cf. Gros, 2014). Walking provides a space for reflection and solitude (cf. Bassett, 2004). As human beings, we are racing against time (cf. Koyama, 1979) and, as a result, we fail to reconnect with the inner self and preserve our well-being. Walking provides an opportunity to address the importance of our existence (cf. Oldstone-Moore, 2009:118).

¹⁹ Translation from Afrikaans to English.

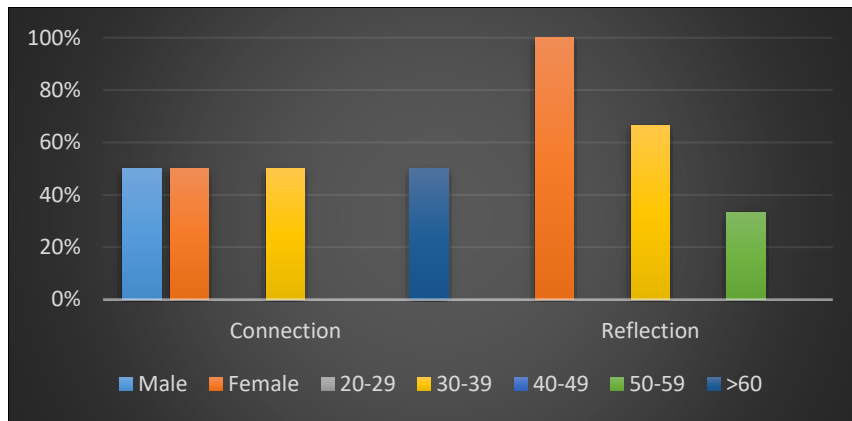


Figure 6.13: Time to reflect and connect

Figure 6.13 focuses on time to reflect and female and male numbers as related to this. There is a strong link between some of the age groups and the theme of connection, as well as a modest difference among the age groups and that of reflection. Participants FP10, MP21 (age >60), and FP32 stated that life could be so hectic that it could pass a person by. Yet, hiking provided a platform to make time for themselves. They viewed the time during COVID-19 as a journey where they could rest and rewind, spending time with the inner self:

Hiking also gives you that time to reflect, reconnect ... for yourself when life gets too busy (FP10).

As seniors with comorbidities we realised the importance of looking after ourselves and followed a strict and healthy eating plan, took extra care with hygiene, sanitising everything (all the time). So yes, a lot of walking took place – outside in our yard and indoors (MP21).

[I] am alone with my thoughts when I walk and can just reflect (FP32).

FP10, MP21, and FP32 agreed that walking established a bond among the participants' and the interaction with the inner self. They concurred that life was hectic and that it could slip you by and that hiking provided a platform for them to make time for themselves. As such they saw walking as a journey where they could relax and refresh themselves. They found that sharing their experiences with the group allowed them to reflect on their commitment, devotion, and sacrifices. To use their own words:

[You should] take time for yourself when life gets too busy (FP10).

[You should] spend time with yourself (FP32).

Yes, I felt part of a team and the sharing of each individual's accomplishments, reflection, commitment, dedication and sacrifice (FP39).

These participants clearly viewed walking as a tool for personal accomplishment. Personal accomplishment includes taking time to reflect which was vital for their inner serenity and independence. The longer they walked, the more kilometres they covered, the more they felt liberated.

6.14 Kilometres to freedom

By releasing one’s worries and leaving everything disconnected and insignificant behind, walking brings about changeable freedom. It provides changeable freedom to choose among matters and refocus oneself (cf. Gros, 2014). Stoddard (1997) defines the distance a pilgrim must walk at a time as “movement distance.” Moving forward one-step at time, walking a certain distance is a journey within an area of roughly fifteen square kilometres. Every kilometre walked by participants was a kilometre closer to independence and being able to feel free added value to their quality of life. I vividly recall walking the Camino de Santiago in Spain, moving forward and walking so many kilometres. My feet were in excruciating pain after walking so many kilometres. On finishing the Camino, I had a chat with other pilgrims who had gone through the same ordeal. According to one pilgrim’s account, one left all your burdens behind, including the anguish one felt that was caused by walking (cf. Chapter 1). The hundreds of kilometres put a strain on pilgrims’ stamina, putting their patience and fortitude to the test (cf. Maddrell, 2013).

Table 6.3: Personalised COVID-trail: March 2021 – April 2021

	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4
	12-18 March 2021	19-25 March 2021	26 March-1 April 2021	2 April-8 April 2021
FP1	7.03	0	0	0
MP2	41.33	41.5	41.75	41.4
FP3	44	5.4	0	0
FP4	31.69	0	0	0
FP5	52.84	47.4	44.41	57.9
FP6	56.48	64.4	8.79	0
FP7	12.6	0	0	0
FP8	12.82	0	0	0
FP9	57.94	57.94	63.15	53.8
FP10	55.59	59.8	62.45	55.2
FP11	37.39	0	0	0
FP12	42.9	29.7	0	0
FP13	63.68	60.8	17.87	0
FP14	57.84	75.1	50.13	5.54
MP1 5	52.84	54.7	58.2	50.1
MP1 6	45.95	45.4	11.07	0

Table 3 shows how many kilometres each participant walked during the first, second, third, and fourth weeks of the March 2021 and April 2021 on their personalised route.

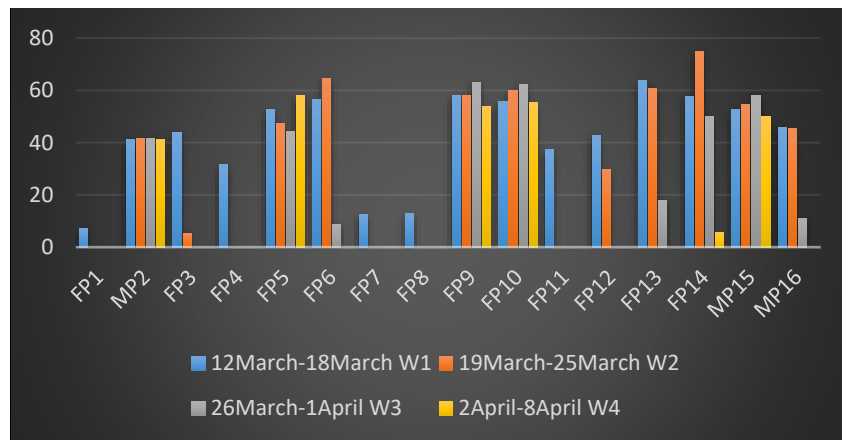


Figure 6.14: Personalised COVID-trail: March, 2021 – April, 2021

Figure 6.14 depicts a personalised COVID trail walked from 12 March to 8 April 2021. Data were collected and recorded during this period, in which 16 participants took part (see Table 3 for more details). They completed between 0 and under 80 kilometres’ worth of steps. There was a strong correlation between the numbers of kilometres and steps completed by participants. The personalised COVID route or pilgrimage was experienced in terms of steps or kilometres. The different figures and tables presented above display the number of steps and kilometres participants walked. Over a period of a few months during COVID-19 pandemic, participants walked many steps and kilometres, which later became personal achievements. Participants’ achievements no longer delivered the desired level of satisfaction.

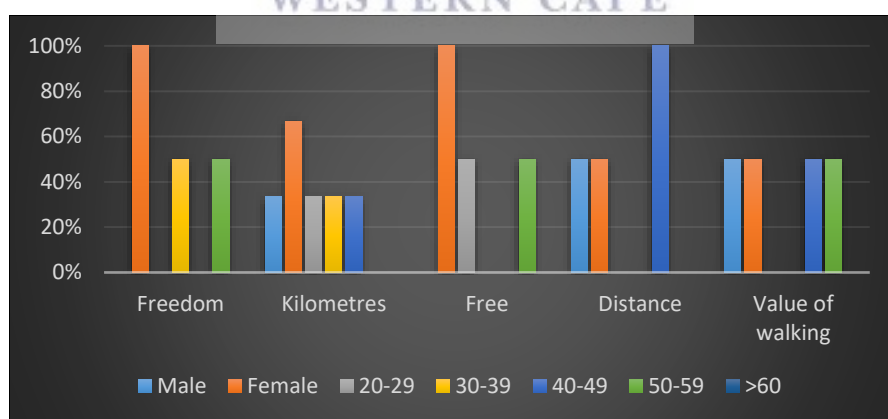


Figure 6.15: Kilometres to freedom

The number of kilometres walked is depicted in Figure 6.15. The walking provided an opportunity for participants to gain mental independence. The graph depicts participants’

perspectives in terms of freedom, kilometres covered, the desire to be free, distance walking, and the benefits of walking that brought value to their life. The graph illustrates the various age groups as well as the gender ratio in order to further elucidate the number of kilometres walked by means of steps.

Participants walked for miles and expressed qualities that complemented walking such as freedom, distance, and experiencing the benefits of walking. FP8 and FP11 pointed to walking kilometres as an experience of freedom because, when they were out in nature, they felt happy and free, and walking provided them with a sense of independence, tranquillity, and solitude. They state:

[I] experienced a happiness and freedom that came over me, it's like nothing matters but this moment (FP8).

I walk to feed my body and soul. I walk to maintain my sanity. I walk because it gives me a sense of freedom, serenity and solitude (FP11).

This means that every kilometre walked promoted a sense of independence for the individual. FP24 and FP29 revealed that the number of kilometres walked justified the walking experience. The number brought a sense of completion and achievement. It also increased their walking capabilities. As a result of the number of kilometres walked, participants were encouraged to go further, and consistency became a part of the challenge. According to FP24 and FP29:

You can do more and you can do more steps, you can do more kilometres. At the end of the day you were so surprised by your capabilities (FP24).

I'm more consistent in my desire to achieve the steps and kilometres. Physically my body was changing and that encouraged me more to achieve my set amounts or go beyond that (FP29).

FP2, FP24, and FP29 agreed that walking not only made kilometres possible, but also encouraged them to walk more steps. They were "free" after completing the kilometres. FP7 and FP11 felt that walking created a sense of freedom and that the participant was in charge at all times. Participants felt free when they walked in the mountains and in nature. They claimed the following:

Walking is free, it does not require any specific equipment and I am in control of my number of steps when I walk, where I walk and with whom I walk (FP7).

I could walk in the mountains, feel the sun on my skin, talk to God, listen to the peacefulness of nature and feel free (FP11).

Participants agreed that walking gave them a sense of “freedom.” The quantity of miles and distance walked had a vital function around their sense of well-being and freedom, the sense of being “free.” Participants’ MP2 and FP33 said that the number of kilometres was related to the actual distance walked. The benefits of walking in terms of individual accountability in the group prompted participants to walk the extra mile (in kilometres). They would walk in their rooms and driveways to meet their distances.

[The] number of steps leads to a certain amount of distance being covered (MP2).

I keep on checking my phone to see how many kilometres I have walked. If I didn't walk enough, I would walk in my room, in my drive-way, you know (FP33).

MP2 and FP33 both agreed that the distances walked motivated them and held them accountable. The distance they walked was advantageous to their health. MP2 and FP11 saw the benefits of walking when I walked so many kilometres. Walking is related to the influence on the mind and body in this context. Their perception of simplicity is enhanced by walking:

The true benefit of walking is the health of mind and body (MP2)

Walking and hiking forms part of that simplistic union (FP11).

It is clear that participants benefited from their walking. The number of kilometres provided a favourable outcome for participants’ walking experiences. The participants’ overall performance was measured by recording the number of steps in the WhatsApp group.

6.15 Stepping up in a metric unit

As human beings, we find ourselves enmeshed in measurement systems. The traits identified in measuring systems describe whom we are, where we are going, and how we should pursue and continue with our lives. Within a measurement system, we discover a specific unit that is restricted and conformed to our needs.

Table 6.4: Personalised COVID trail: February, 2021 – March, 2021

	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3
	16 – 22 FEBRUARY 2021	23 FEBRUARY –1 MARCH 2021	2 – 8 MARCH 2021
FP26	15000	29500	37713
FP27	17500	29500	35115

FP28	5000	7384	23226
FP29	17500	25500	41556
FP30	17500	29500	22550
FP31	2500	0	0
FP32	17500	29500	55088
FP33	17500	29500	54796
FP34	15000	27662	18167
MP35	17500	29500	42598
MP36	15000	25000	0
MP37	15000	0	0
MP38	17500	29500	42665
FP39	15000	24678	35898
FP40	17500	27535	45081
FP4116	17500	29500	47437
MP42	17500	29500	80273
FP4318	17500	29500	52596
FP44	17500	29500	34106
FP45	11347	20903	34861

Table 4 shows the number of steps each participant took during the first, second, and third weeks of February 2021 and March 2021 in terms of their personalised route.

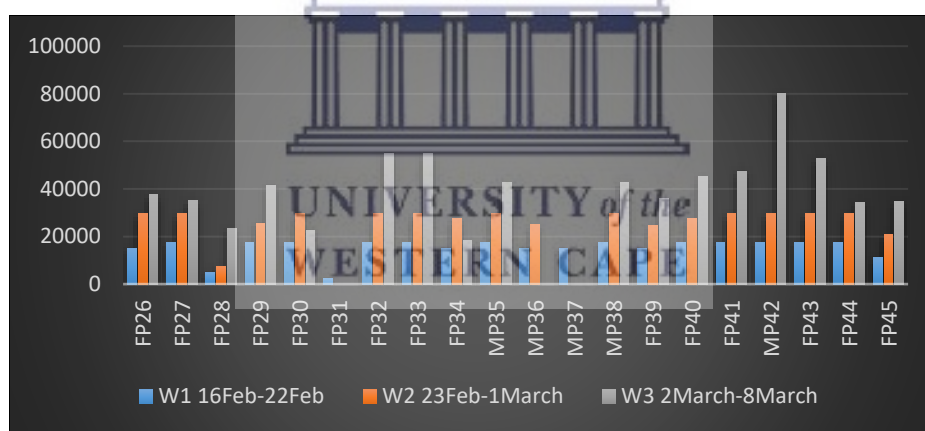


Figure 6.16: Personalised COVID-trail: February, 2021 – March, 2021

Figure 6.16 depicts a personalised COVID trail walked between February 16 2021 and March 8 2021. Data were collected and recorded, and 20 participants took part in this personalised COVID trail. Participants completed between 0 and less than 82 000 steps.

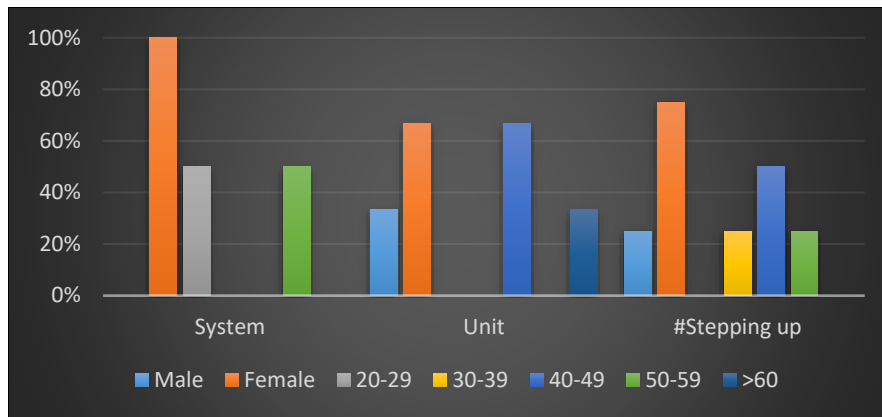


Figure 6.17: Stepping up: A metric unit: System, unit, and #Stepping up

The graph shows that there was consistency in the number of steps taken throughout the course of the week. For the sake of this study, steps or stepping up are units of measurement that provide a compensation for our experiences and our perceptions of those experiences. To record and post steps in the WhatsApp group, many techniques were applied. The participants discovered measurements that were perfect for recording and posting their steps. All of the following I propose to be a step-up in a metric unit. FP24 and FP45 viewed the system of measurement in terms of walking capabilities that formed their system of measurement and determined the type of walking they pursued as their benchmark. According to them:

At the end of the day you were so surprised by your capabilities. You didn't realise that you could walk so many steps (FP24).

The type of walking I do is more than the act on foot (FP45).

FP24 and FP45 here demonstrate that walking abilities and the type of walking pursued could be considered as methods of measurement. The method that was taken and used to measure and record the steps is referred to as the unit of measurement. The system is then divided into units of measurement. FP22, MP25 (over 60 years old), and FP33 illuminated the unit of measurement by illustrating how stepping up within a WhatsApp group was a platform and measure used to be safe during COVID-19. MP25 investigated Rondebosch Commune as a unit of measurement because walking out on the road had become too dangerous. The space where the Commune was located became the unit of measurement. The participants' used their phone to track their steps as a unit of measurement in order to meet their personal goals. In their own words:

[The] safety measures they've put in place to protect themselves and their families. Even though the interaction was minimal, it created a platform for us to do the things we love (FP22).

Rondebosch commune. I walked 32 times around it. I do not like walking in a group. I was thrown with a beer bottle from a car while I was walking²⁰ (MP25).

I keep on checking my phone to see how many kilometres I have walked. If I don't walk enough [I walk more] (FP33).

These participants agreed that using different means for tracking steps and walking had been explored. The WhatsApp group, finding a safe area to walk in, and using a phone, all amounted to units of measurement for stepping up to increase and improve on their amount of steps walked. In order to establish a metric unit, particular characteristics were identified with a view to walking steps. Participants in the WhatsApp group were provided with guidelines. They were given daily deadlines in terms of time and the amount of steps they needed to complete. The next discussion is also a way of recording and walking steps. Participants MP2, FP29, FP33, and FP45 presented a healthy mind and body as facilitating stepping up. Stepping up because of the number of steps participants' had to post in the WhatsApp group on a daily basis for a specific period. The association of stepping up became the attribute in consistency. As mentioned the number of steps achieved became the attribute in stepping up. Participants agreed that personal achievements were important elements of stepping up. They explained this in these words:

[Walking is the] health of mind and body which is a result of the number of steps and kilometres one covers (MP2).

I'm more consistent in my want to achieve the steps and kilometres (FP29).

To me achieving it was the only thing on my mind. How many steps, ok let me walk on the spot quickly (FP33).

Every day my kms/steps are a personal achievement (FP45).

The establishment of a metric unit clearly added value to stepping up according to these participants. The system of measurement and the metric unit were found to resonate with each other. The structure for the stepping-up procedure was centred on the recording and posting of

²⁰ Translation from Afrikaans to English.

steps in the WhatsApp group, which is referred to as a metric unit. The stepping-up procedure was also used to move between timeframes.

6.16 Stepping up in and out of time

Participants experienced the freedom of walking wherever and anywhere they wished. They were free to move about as needed. Moving, walking, and executing your subsequent steps do not have a time limit. It is a part of your everyday life. For the most part, every movement is an unintentional step. When it comes to stepping it up in and out of time, some elements validate the process, including timeslots, hiking, limits, stepping up, stepping out, and loneliness.

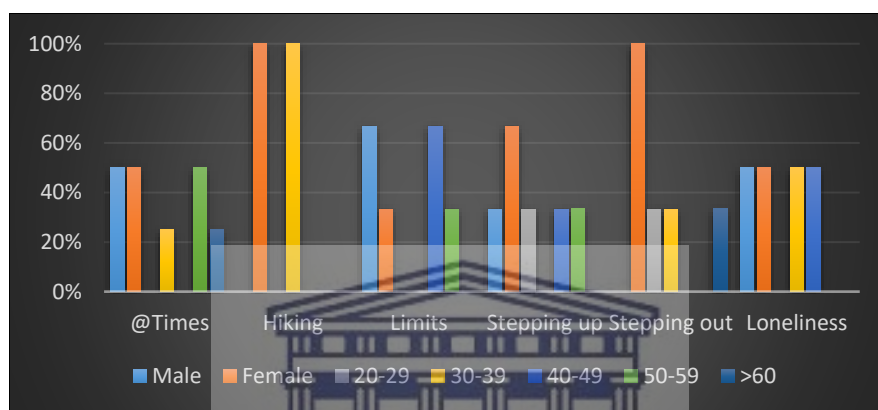


Figure 6.18: Stepping up in and out of time

The different features presented in Figure 6.18 elucidate the nature of stepping up. Participants' views on the influence of steps taken over time, through hiking, limitations encountered and managing loneliness by walking were found among female and male participants. Participants' perceptions are represented by the number of steps graph in the. The distinct features of the graph were demonstrated by these perceptions. In order to comprehend the number of kilometres taken with steps, the graph represents the various age groups as well as the gender ratio.

Participants FP1, FP8, MP16, age 50-59), and MP21 at times felt depressed and gloomy, but walking helped them cope with their depression. Walking and being outside in nature made participants feel grateful. They found walking to be a challenging activity at times. The time offered allowed them to meditate and cleanse their thoughts. In their own words:

At times I felt depressed and negative but walking and being part of this group kept my sanity (FP1).

At times I love how the sun just warms you and gives you that well-deserved tan after a long week of being in office, or sitting on a rock (FP8).

[Walking] offers me the time to think, to clear my mind, revisit my priorities and re-evaluate my goals (MP16).

Walking was never really my thing. The few times that I ventured out were because of pressure from my wife (MP21).

As a result, the participants believed that walking provided an opportunity to assess their lives' quality. More steps allowed them to be more attentive, and they stepped out of their comfort zone into a moment that improved their quality of life. FP10 saw stepping it up in nature as time for herself: time to reconnect with her inner self and reflect on what is important. She claimed that:

Hiking also give you that time to reflect, reconnect and take time for yourself when life gets too busy (FP10).

Being outside gave this participant the feeling of self and a sense of being as shaped by time. Stepping up during the initial lockdown of March 2020, COVID-19, was a challenge for FP11, MP15 (age 40-49), and MP17 (age 40-49). The challenge came with constraints, making it even more difficult to find time to go for a walk outdoors. Participants were limited in their ability to exercise due to the constraints. Walking during lockdown contributed positively to participants' overall increase of emotional confidence. In the words of these participants:

Working remote, made walking with the restricted times challenging as I had deadlines and the restricted times did not always suit my routine (FP11).

Walk[ing] during those allotted times one was allowed to exercise (MP15).

The ultimate permitting of walking and general exercising during lockdown therefore contributed greatly towards general increase of emotional confidence (MP17).

It is therefore clear that increasing the intensity of walking during constraints had a significant impact on the participants' overall well-being. FP14 (age 20-29), MP16, and FP22 said that stepping it up brought a smile to their faces. They walked because they felt it necessary to do so. Stepping up became more than just a way for the participants to stay healthy and fit, and stepping up one-step at a time motivated these participants to achieve more steps. In their own words:

I smile many times because it is as if for those few moments nothing else matters. I walk because I need to (FP14).

I try to walk every afternoon and I found that it now has become much more than just a way to keep healthy and fit (MP16).

It feels awesome and it motivates you to even do more steps than the required amount and to push through...one-step at a time (FP22).

FP14, MP16, and FP22 agreed that stepping up had different meanings for each person. Increasing the number of steps taken eventually leads to moving outside of one's safety zone. Stepping out was perceived positively by the participants in the face of constraints and limited movements. Due to COVID-19 lockdowns, face-to-face social groups were taboo, but individuals were allowed to step out on their own. Despite the fact that individuals could no longer join groups in the traditional sense, they could be a member of a WhatsApp group, and they felt motivated as a result of joining these. When participants FP24, FP26, and FP27 stepped outside, they forgot all negative things. Being a part of a digital group or community caused them to feel less isolated when they went for a walk, as reflected in these responses:

You could no longer join your social groups or go out to the groups or various things that made you feel part of something else. So even it was not a physical interaction all the time but there was some. So we all motivated each other (FP24).

When you walk you forget all the negativity that hounds you. You do not have time to think about that (FP26).

Having the group on WhatsApp, speaking about one common goal such as walking and your steps, felt as if you were part of a group or community. You did not feel so secluded and you were still part of something bigger (FP27).

They therefore agreed that stepping away allowed them to think about other things. It allowed them to leave a negative memory behind. They were part of a WhatsApp group and did not feel so isolated or alone. Participant FP27 (age 40-49) stipulated that, while she did not appreciate walking alone, she was accompanied by her dog, which made the challenge less tough and, along with MP37, she felt anxious about isolation while walking helped alleviate this:

At times the only difficult thing I found was walking alone. If I would walk alone it wasn't always safe but I found I could do that when I take my dog with me and go for walk (FP27).

Being in isolation and being confined in an isolated space for a considerable amount of time was a big contributor towards anxiety, emotional stress and fear (MP37).

These respondents confirm that stepping up made the loneliness bearable and walking was instrumental for facing isolation during the initial lockdown of March 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic as a whole.

6.17 Achieving steps and kilometres

Participants in recreational activities can reap significant benefits and rewards such as physical well-being, spiritual fulfilment, self-actualisation, self-expression, social achievement, and social relations and associated opportunities (cf. Liu and Yu (2015:161), where severe leisure encourages self-actualization, self-enrichment, self-regeneration or renewal, and a sense of accomplishment (cf. Stebbins, 1992, 1997). Achieving a certain number of steps and kilometres was satisfying and fostered a sense of community among the participants. They could create goals and objectives for themselves. The sense of accomplishment from reaching those aims and objectives relieved them from anxieties. The steps and kilometres were just the result of a cause; when walking, the participant took one-step at a time, and a particular number of steps resulted in a particular distance walked. The true advantage of walking improved mental and physical health as a result of the number of steps and kilometres covered. After completing the needed steps and kilometres, the participants felt an overwhelming sense of satisfaction. There was a strong desire to do it more frequently. Even if participants felt constrained by other duties, the urge and desire to pursue was considerable. After a morning walk, some of the participants felt as if they could move mountains. Walking allowed them to discover silence within themselves. It provided a good mental stimulant and relaxed the mind, allowing participants to deal with day-to-day issues. The participants' view of life shifted from negative to positive. Walking was believed to have played a significant role in this. They were capable of overcoming difficulties with patience and trust. As a result, participants promoted walking to others so as to obtain insight into the way in which the quality of their lives improved. Walking is a spiritually and physically refreshing experience for the individual. The individual can push himself/ herself and push beyond his/ her own limitations. This goes to show that, if an individual sets his/ her mind to it, the possibilities are endless. Participants' psychological and emotional states improved and they were dealing better with time management. During the week, weather permitting, there was a routine of walking. Overall, walking during lockdown was beneficial to participants, and the objective was to continue doing so even if society

returned to post-COVID-19 times. Participants were convinced that walking, regardless of pace or distance walked, contributed positively to general well-being.

The accomplishment of feeling good inspired the person to go above and beyond the required number of steps and to persevere, one-step at a time. When the participants' fulfilled their goals, it felt great that they could truly push their bodies that far without negative consequences. It established a precedent that the individuals could accomplish more. It also shifted perspectives from the impossible to focus on the possible. Participants' quality of life improved as a result of their drive to excel personally. From the moment the individual opened his or her eyes, steps were taken. His/ her watch was connected to his/ her wrist, and the steps to the bathroom began to count. The sense of well-being came about regardless of whether the walk occurred indoors or outside. When the participant reached a particular point during the day, he/ she would check the steps and realise that more steps were completed than those required for the day. Alternatively, the individual would walk more. The participants were pleased, feeling positive and successful, even in the face of adversity. Because of COVID, the participants came to ponder while walking and there was no time for negativity. COVID caused considerable anxiety, and walking helped alleviate this.

During the 2020 lockdown, the participants would go about their daily activities and spend an hour or two in the late evenings by simply walking in the garden, both front and back. It was difficult for the participant to walk in the region or around the block. However, when the participant returned to work, most of the completed steps were walked at school: a total of 5 000 - 6 000 of these were completed at school. The remainder of the time would be spent at home doing typical things. Participants walked over 10 000 steps per day. They became regular walkers, walking every day. The body and skin of the participants changed in a positive way. The challenge was incredibly satisfying, especially on days when they performed admirably. This did not happen every day, and when it did, the participant was ecstatic. The challenges seemed impossible at the beginning, but only until such time that they started to participate, when it became easier. The only thing on the participant's mind was completing the number of steps and kilometres. Walking on weekends was difficult due to other commitments and family obligations. In order to achieve the steps and kilometres, participants would check their phone on a regular basis to see how many steps and kilometres they had taken or covered. Achievement was a component of the participants' commitment. Commitment led to a habit, and the habit was to walk as much as possible every day. The person adjusted himself/ herself

so as to be goal-oriented and wanted to walk more. It was surprising, since participants were sceptical of their capabilities and abilities to walk for so many kilometres in a month. However, it also encouraged participants to keep going and improve as the steps challenge progressed. It felt fantastic for respondents to achieve a personal objective on a daily basis. It inspired them to be more active and live a healthier lifestyle. Steps dedication formed part of their steps challenge process.

6.18 Steps dedication

The steps challenge and personalised walk had to serve a meaning and purpose. One of the initiatives I came up with was to dedicate the steps walked in empathy or sympathy to people that passed on during COVID. Why steps dedication? What was the purpose of the step's dedication? What does it mean and how does it relate to the study? Steps commitment grew into a movement to express grief and empathy for those who have died, including loved ones, relatives, friends, and colleagues. It was the only way we could express our dissatisfaction and the looming uncertainty that was happening in South Africa. Even though COVID was a global occurrence we could do a steps dedication (see Appendix 8) for loved ones, friends and colleagues in our country. During the initial lockdown of 2020, groups were not allowed to gather. The WhatsApp group tried to fill that void and, by means of the steps dedication, the group started a hashtag #UrbanPilgrimage#SupportTheMovement.

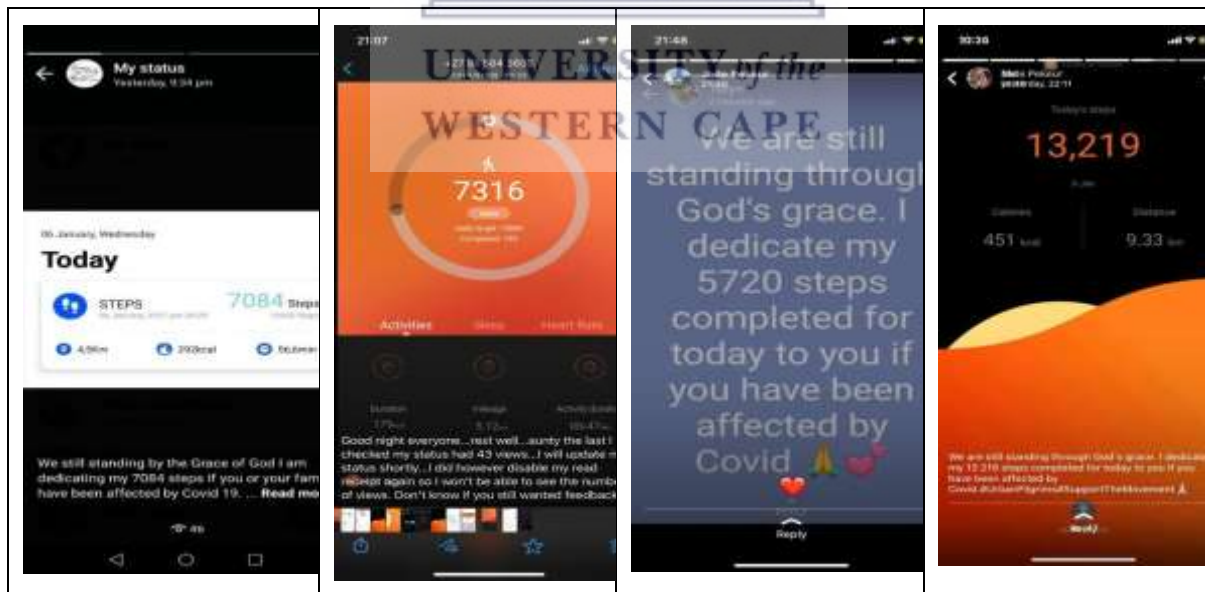


Figure 6.19: #UrbanPilgrimage#SupportTheMovement

Figure 6.19 presents shows that, during the first quarters of 2020 and 2021 many people were infected and lost their lives due to COVID-19. In South Africa, on 5 August 2020, it was

determined by StatsSA (2021) that more women (57%) were infected than men (42%); nonetheless, the death rate for males (51%) was somewhat greater than that for women (49%). For two weeks in a row, participants would dedicate their steps and kilometres to every person or family member affected by COVID-19. Figure 6.19 indicates the dedication and also the number of contacts who viewed it. The spin-off of the dedication led to many people wanting to join the challenge, wanting to be part of what the group stood for and what they were trying to achieve. Every participant's pilgrimage was unique and, whatever the motivation behind the walking was, in the end it served a common goal. A personalised walk or personalised pilgrimage walk is open to anyone. It is fixed rather than limited, and there are no precise prerequisites or preconditions. It is about the experience, the path, walking a unique route, and finding the self (cf. Cohen, 1979). These magical experiences offer solutions, comfort, and answers (cf. Geldenhuys, 2019). One can think about issues you face and allow your mind to work through those and find solutions while walking. After a few hours, either you have found the solution to certain issues or you know what the next step would be in resolving them.

6.19 Conclusion

Participants shared a sense of responsibility, belonging, and sense of community as common characteristics of walking. Walking clearly improved their quality of life, playing an important role in their overall well-being. Despite the fact that they did not know each other, the participants had much in common.

Walking generated a deviation that aided the mending and cleansing of participants' general well-being. As a result of the encouragement, a sense of belonging developed, and each participant created his or her own journey. The personalised journey had a beneficial influence on the health of all participants. A single step was a demonstration of natural ways to improve individual health. For some participants, the WhatsApp group was a lifeline during COVID-19. Participants' well-being was boosted by the qualities of virtual friendship and camaraderie. For others, the virtual contact was critical when it came to completing the steps of the participants' completion of the programme. The completion of the steps allowed the participants to find time to reflect on their overall quality of life and well-being. The longer the individuals walked, the more kilometres they covered, and the more liberated they felt. Taking time to reflect was found to be vital for the participant's inner serenity and independence. There was a clear link between the values entertained, the benefit achieved by walking, and the number of kilometres walked. Participants' achievements no longer delivered the desired level

of satisfaction. Stepping up in a metric unit established the framework for the act of moving into and out of time. Participants were in agreement that stepping up made loneliness bearable. Walking was instrumental in facing isolation during the initial lockdown of March 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic in general.

The subsequent chapter will offer my autoethnographic narrative. It discusses my personalised pilgrimage and experiences while walking.



Chapter 7

My STEDRA-WITBREL journey: An autoethnographic account

7.1 Introduction

This chapter builds on the previous chapter one, and focuses on work done on a pilgrimage walking and spiritual well-being of a personalised COVID trail. Although studies in pilgrimage walking and spiritual well-being have examined the effect of leisure activities, there has not been a study on a personalised COVID trail/ pilgrimage in the South African context. As such, this chapter elucidates for the first time the exploring perceptions and experiences of fellow pilgrims participating in walking a personalised COVID trail with the narrator.

The chapter examines the concept of individual well-being through storytelling, which focuses on the different journeys experienced throughout the Cape Winelands District, cutting across five municipal districts. The discussion addresses the features of meaning, purpose, and accomplishment by the pilgrims. Meaning includes putting one's abilities to good use in order to achieve meaningful goals. When we devote time to something bigger than ourselves, we are at our best. It could be goal specific activities. These activities have a compelling motive for people to participate. Individuals must be able to reflect on their lives with a sense of success in order to achieve well-being. A successful life is one that is productive and fulfilling. Even when it produces no pleasant emotion or significance, this way of living a meaningful life is pursued for its own purpose (cf. further definition of meaning and purpose and accomplishment by Seligman in Chapter 3). Although numerous studies on pilgrimage walking have identified pilgrimage/ walking as an attribute of well-being, little analytic attention has been paid to walking a personalised COVID-pilgrimage within the South African context. I address this by demonstrating that the attributes of pilgrimage walking differ from person to person. I argue that, even though there are distinct characteristics of a pilgrimage or a pilgrim, the personalised experiences are determined by perception and that it can be achieved through different ways and means.

My STEDRA-WITBREL pilgrimage can be described in these terms: every step I took, every kilometre I covered, tells a distinct tale, tells my story, and tells how I interpreted the many routes within the Cape Winelands district. This is not a narrative given by someone else, nor is it a story I have read or seen; it is my story.

7.2 Why the interest?

The initial three weeks of lockdown, when one was not able to freely move around, were traumatising for me as a walker, a hiker, and nature lover, as indicated. I am a free spirited human being and enjoy simple things in life. Walking is an example of such a simple thing. Collins-Kreiner discusses spiritual walking as an instrument to foster “communities of passion” (2010: 440-456). The simplicity and humble act of walking outdoors without technological influences or disturbances, nurture the capacity to care for others. This deed of selflessness expands to the walker and respect for the environment. Not being able to walk in nature and being limited to urban walking was daunting not only on my physique but also on my soul. I have tried Youtube walking, walking in my lounge, walking up and down my stairs. However, I was still left with a sense of deprivation as my soul feeds off open spaces, clean air and silence. “Think while walking, walk while thinking, and let writing be but the light pauses, as the body on a walk rest in contemplation of wide open spaces” (Gros, 2014:20). After three weeks, I got a bit daring, walking around the house in order to feed my physique and my soul but yet it was not enough. The confined space and limited walking left me with a feeling of distress. Watching and reading the news of COVID-19 infections and deaths fuelled my distress. My spirit felt insecure and my body retaliated. My sleeping patterns changed. I would be awake until two in the morning, fall asleep and sleep until midday. My digestive system became irregular; many a days I would go without relief and I felt bloated. I experienced headaches, my body was in shock, and it felt weak and unresponsive.

I needed more, my soul, spirit and body needed more to be happy and well. Walking according to Cleanthes is the psyche that is an extension from the leading part of the soul all the way to the feet (Inwood, 2014:69). My well-being is driven by my walking, hiking, and physical exercise. Then the announcement came after the original lockdown of March 2020 that we were allowed to hike, and I was excited. I could walk in the mountains, feel the sun on my skin, talk to my Creator, listen to the peacefulness of nature, and feel free.

So many times one needs to do introspection but find it challenging to do this by oneself in a confined space. I walk to feed my body and soul. I walk to maintain my sanity. I walk because it gives me a sense of freedom, serenity, and solitude. I walk because it is good for my body. I walk for conversation with my Creator. I walk to pray. I am a walker.

7.3 Demographic overview

This route finds itself located in the Cape Winelands, an area located north of the Peninsula of Cape Town. The STEDRA-WITBREL route, as I call it, cuts across districts within this area. The abbreviation for STEDRA-WITBREL represents, as indicated, the Stellenbosch-Drakenstein-Witzenberg-Breedevalley-Langeberg geographical area district in the Cape Winelands District, and my autoethnographic (a qualitative storytelling approach, see Nash, 2004, Chapter 4) journey was carried out in these areas. The Cape Winelands District is made up of five subdistricts covering an area of 22 309 km.² It stretches from Stellenbosch to Paarl and through majestic mountain passes to Tulbagh, Ceres, or Op-die-Berg or, via the Huguenot Tunnel, to Worcester and into the Hex River Valley along the N1 Touwsrivier. For the return drive, one could take a leisurely wind through the backroads to Montagu, taking the long way to Stellenbosch (Stellenbosch Municipality, 2021).

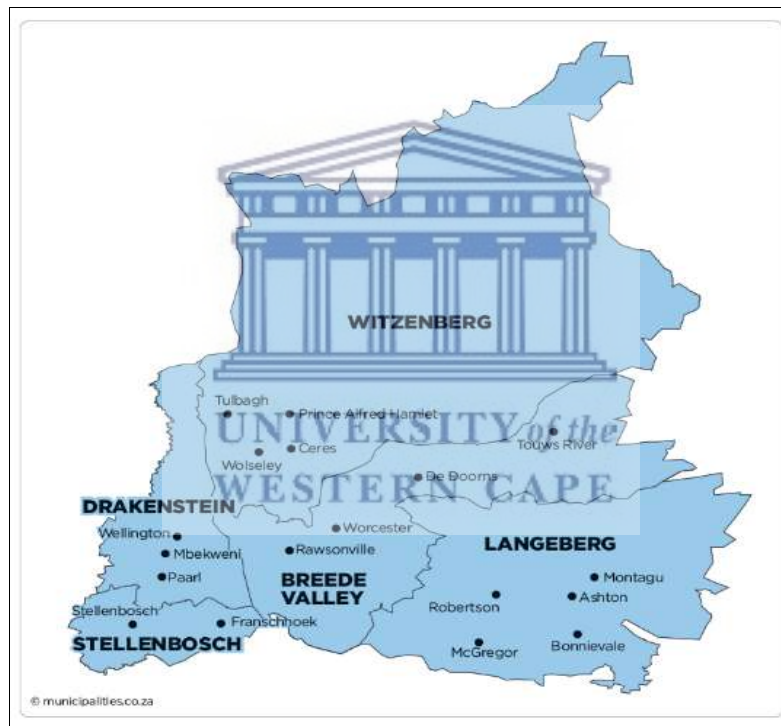


Figure 7.1: Location of the Cape Winelands district (Source: Cape Winelands District Municipality, n.d.)

The purpose of the STEDRA-WITBREL pilgrimage on the Cape Winelands was to introduce and apply the concept of pilgrimage as used in worldwide pilgrimages. The STEDRA-WITBREL route is located within the different municipalities in the Cape Winelands. In fact, STEDRA-WITBREL (Figure 7.1) encapsulates the abbreviations of all the districts in the Cape Winelands. However, this route that I walked was new to me, while safety was of concern,

given this unfamiliarity. I had to map out and discover and explore this route. Mapping out the route was challenging. So, how did I go about accomplishing this? It was a methodical process that necessitated time spent on preparation. Every step of walking represented a meaning, purpose, and accomplishment. The plan was to walk a loop comprising 302 kilometres. The first stage of the process, or mapping, was to drive the road, measure the distance between towns, and assess the safety of walking the journey. Part of this entailed identifying potential lodging options in each of the towns to which the pilgrims' journey would take them. This made me realise that a pilgrimage like this would provide economic opportunities for citizens of the towns passed through by the pilgrims.

7.4 Pilgrimage: Stellenbosch area

Stellenbosch is about 50 kilometres from Cape Town and is bordered by the N1 and N2 highways. The municipal area is approximately 900 square kilometres. As per community survey population growth projections, the population of Stellenbosch in 2016 was a total of 176 543 inhabitants and 52 374 residences (Stellenbosch Municipality, 2021).

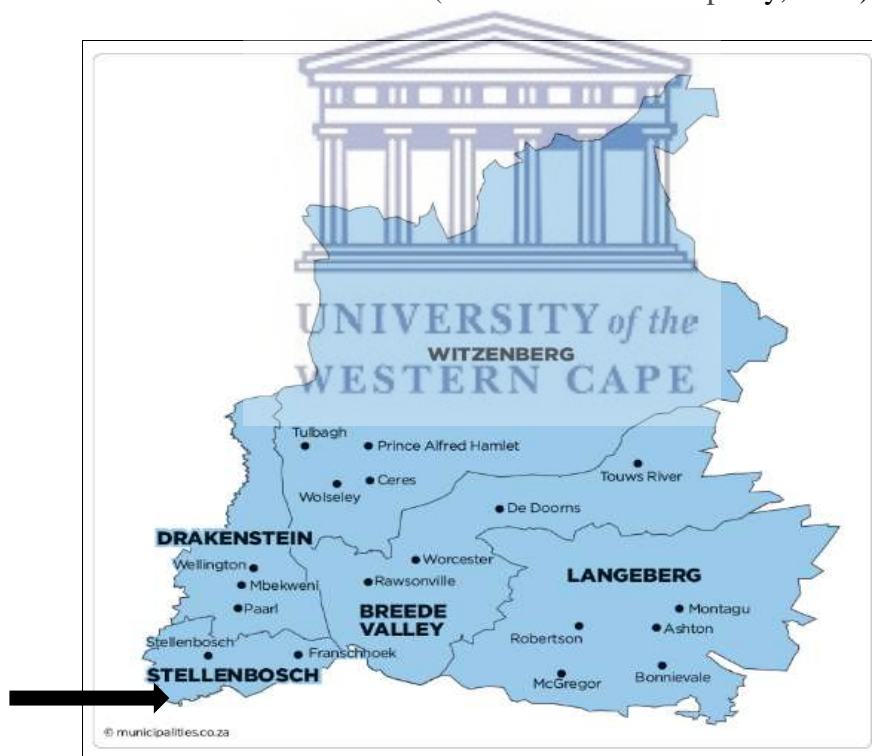


Figure 7.2: Location of Stellenbosch in the Cape Winelands district (Source: Cape Winelands District Municipality, n.d.)

The municipality's authority extends from Jamestown to Raithby in the south, Bottelary, Koelenhof, and Klapmuts in the north, and across the Helshoogte Pass to Pniel, Kylemore,

Groendal, and Franschhoek in the east (Figure 7.2). Stellenbosch is South Africa's second oldest town, dating back to 1679, when the then-Governor of the Cape, Simon van der Stel, renamed an island in the Eerste River Stellenbosch. This saw the start of the first farming activity in the area. Today, the region is known for its great wines, fruit, world-renowned cultural landscapes, and remarkable picturesque qualities. The towns of Stellenbosch and Franschhoek are known for their many artistic features, such as Dutch, Georgian, and Victorian architecture, which represent a rich heritage and traditions, as well as historical divisions among the locals (Cape Winelands Municipality, 2021).

7.4.1 Pilgrimage of cleansing: Klapmuts to Werda (across boundaries and districts)

This was a new route and I never thought that mapping out a familiar terrain but also an unfamiliar walking path could be so challenging. Finding our Camino²¹ created so many exciting moments of fulfilment, happiness, and joy. Even though the Klapmuts to Werda route was an unexplored path, walking and experiencing nature and the landscape were a blessing. Walking through wet sand, walking through mud puddles, trying to figure out where to step, where to put your foot down in order to map out a trail only increases ones' excitement. One-step at a time we moved forward. As a result of being in constant motion, one's sense of time was altered. Things passed you by, and you passed things by. At times, one felt besides oneself paying attention to the steps and footprints along the way as though you were outside or inside of time and space. When you walk, for that moment nothing else is more important than the walk and the experience of the walk (cf. Watson, 2006:289). I could see that this path had never been explored. Normally, mapped-out routes are indicated by beacons, markers, or human-made footpaths, but this route lacked all of these features (Figure 7.3).

Our footsteps were the first in mapping out a walkable route. We got to a point where one felt how one's energy drained from one's body, how tired your feet were, to the extent that you could tell yourself: "It is well with my soul." We were greeted by horses, ducks, geese, flowers, Fynbos, squirrels, cows, and bulls from the surrounding areas we were walking through. The occasional car and truck were at first experienced as distracting but after a while, walking with one's own thoughts started to block out any distractions. One blocked out everything that was insignificant in the moment and focused on the now-moment. The last hour felt like an eternity, the anticipated sore feet created an unsettling vibe in one's brain. We had arrived at our destiny

²¹ See the interest about the Camino as discussed in Chapter 1.

after 3 hours and 11 minutes, or 20866 steps, or 15.9 kilometres of walking, with the sun in all its variation of yellow and orange greeting the slow but sure embrace of nightfall.



Figure 7.3: Images taken on the road from Klapmuts to Werda

7.4.2 Reflection: Pilgrimage of cleansing: Klapmuts to Werda (across boundaries and districts)

The experience of traversing the route from Klapmuts to Werda (Figure 7.3) was more than the eye could meet. It was an enriching journey. Driving the route was a completely different experience from putting one foot in front of the other. The bodily and emotional experience was one-of-a-kind. The Klapmuts to Werda path was a brand-new route, adding to the thrill of discovering and experiencing something different. Again, I had no idea that documenting both existing and unusual hiking trails could be so challenging, but the challenge only added to the meaning and purpose of discovering a new route. Discovering this Camino culminated in experiences and a sense of fulfilment, joy, contentment, and accomplishment. This was achieved one thought after another, one-step at a time. When there is a continuous movement, time is not important. A spiritual event occurred: while walking, one engaged more and more in the purpose of the journey. The journey became more meaningful to the pilgrim. The journey became the path and discovery of new ways and means of completing a personalised journey.

7.4.3 Pilgrimage of healing: Salvation Army – Klapmuts – Simondium – Boschendal

In this section of our pilgrimage, we started at the Salvation Army premises a week after we had started walking the first route. We walked on the R101 in a southerly direction towards Klapmuts, which covered a distance of eight kilometres. This was a beautiful walk, with many cyclists on the road, greeting and chirping away. A perfect day for a beautiful Sunday pilgrimage. How blessed we were to experience this adventure close to Stellenbosch. On our journey, my fellow pilgrims shared stories about their families, their health and, even though one person from the group did not feel like a hundred percent, she was adamant that she did not want to stop. We got to Klapmuts an hour later, bought water from the local shop, and turned onto the R43. It reminded me so much of the Camino experience my husband and I had in Spain, as we experienced the friendliness of the locals trying to sell what they had next to the road. In this instance they were fruit vendors trying to sell guavas and naartjies. We stopped for a moment at the street stall and tried to bargain with the vendors, and my bargaining read: “kan ons eers proe of dit soet is, voor ons koop”? [may we taste whether they are sweet first, before we purchase any?]²² They were very friendly and offered each of us a naartjie. It was a bit sour, but we thanked them and continued with our journey towards the R45.

The next leg of our pilgrimage was towards Simondium. The route took us in a south-westerly direction for nine kilometres to reach it. Unlike the route from the Salvation Army to Klapmuts, the route from Klapmuts to Simondium was surrounded by beautiful farms and mountains. The landscape was breath-taking, and the scenery and view was amazing. Although the road was noisy, with cars passing by regularly, we enjoyed the scenery and admired the landscape. Passing cars with their passengers would smile at us, waving, as if they could relate to our journey. What got me anxious and excited at the same time was coming across a couple of spider webs attached to some fencing. The fascinating part was that the cocoon-hive was as big as a bird's nest (Figure 7.4). I had never seen something like that before and I realised that walking a route led to a total different experience than driving it. It was like being in touch with one's immediate surroundings, experiencing things at face value. You find yourself surrounded by different shades of burnt-orange trees presenting the arrival of autumn. The warmth of the sun was shining on one's face and we were now all walking without uttering a word, taking in the beauty of creation. This led to one of our fellow pilgrims asking why there was any need to walk a pilgrimage in another country, given the beauty of our own country that we could

²² Translation from Afrikaans to English: “Can we first taste whether it is sweet before we buy.”

explore. We passed farms such as Babylonstoren, Southern Cross, Noble Hill, and Vrede en Lust and came across a few kids asking us “wat doen julle en hoekom het julle stokke?” [what are you doing and why do you carry sticks?]²³ They were referring to our hiking sticks and our response was that we were taking a very “long” walk. With kids it is difficult to explain the meaning of walking and the purpose of our “long” walk and they were content with the answer we gave them. We crossed a railway line and, nine kilometres later, we found ourselves in Simondium.

It was striking that people would watch and look at us with uncertainty about what we were doing. We came across another fruit and vegetable vendor who was obviously trying to sell his product. Again my response was: “ons moet eers proe of dit soet is” [we have to see first if it is sweet].²⁴ Each of us was offered a naartjie and the taste of the naartjie was beautiful (Figure 7.4).



Figure 7.4: Images taken on the road: Salvation Army – Klapmuts – Simondium – Boschendal

We shared with the vegetable vendor where we started our journey and where we would end it for the day. By the frown on his face I could see he did not believe a word of what we were saying about where we started our journey. After we again tried to convince him that this was the distance we had walked, he sceptically accepted our word, as he also wanted to make a sale. We bought fruit from him and continued our journey on the R45 to the Boschendal Wine Estate in a south-westerly direction. We completed our Sunday pilgrimage in 32 211 steps, or 25.46

²³ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “What are you doing and why do you have sticks?”

²⁴ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “We must first taste if it is sweet.”

kilometres, or 5 hours and 38 minutes. Our feet were tired, and our bodies were tired, but our hearts were grateful. We stopped for coffee, interacted with the locals, and felt blessed.

7.4.4 Reflection: Pilgrimage of healing: Salvation Army – Klapmuts – Simondium – Boschendal

Every path my fellow pilgrims and I embarked on took us on a different journey, making the journey's meaning and purpose so much more than just a walk. The journey from the Salvation Army along Klapmuts and Simondium to Boschendal was incredible (Figure 7.4). How could one do justice in words to the idyllic scenery surrounded by mountains? Without being present in that setting, it is difficult to comprehend and envision the Creator's perfection. It was truly picture-perfect.

The interaction between passing bikes and motorists, the greetings, waving, recognition of oneself as a walker, and sharing a spiritual connection amongst the fellow pilgrims between the mountains and nothingness all contributed to great vibes and impressions. The friendliness of the locals, who offered that we try the products they were selling, created a sense of humility that can only be felt by nature lovers. The merchants' unforced approach to selling in order to put bread on their tables can only be recognised by a convenient agreement between the seller and the buyer. Nature's receptivity, people passing by, and interaction with the walker/ pilgrim passing by were all worthwhile. The positive emotions generated by the various on-route encounters, the connection with everything on the journey, and the relationship between yourself and your Creator dissolved into thin air the unpleasant sensation of body aches. The undertaking of discovering another pilgrimage route was worthwhile as we reached our goal at the end of the day's walking.

7.4.5 Pilgrimage of remembrance: Boschendal to Franschhoek

The personalised journey continued a week after we (pilgrims) walked the pilgrimage of healing under overcast skies and a howling wind. My three fellow pilgrims and I were now starting to walk from Boschendal in a north-westerly direction where we connected with the R45. The route took us in a westerly direction towards our destination. It started to drizzle and a few minutes later one could hear the orchestrated sound of the raindrops on your rain jacket forming a melody in your ears. Cars passing by were driving through potholes filled with water. The sound of splashing melodised a hissing sound, confirming the howling wind's

announcement of rain. We came across the “Memory Valley of Remembrance” monument for soldiers who had lost their lives during the war of 1914-1919 (Figure 7.5).



Figure 7.5: Images taken on the road from Boschendal to Franschhoek

I have driven this road so many a times and have never seen or noticed this monument. When you walk, you discover so many beautiful things. You look at things from a different perspective. We spent a few minutes at the “Memory valley of remembrance” and continued our pilgrimage.

The sound of the Dwarsriver was calming and full and we spent a few minutes admiring the peacefulness of the river and then continued west. Intermittently, the rain would come down and we walked in silence with only the sound of the raindrops on our rain jackets and the occasional sound of a car breaking the silence. It was a moment in which we were duly admiring the beauty of the landscape, acknowledging it as the true handiwork of the Creator. For a few moments, one of the pilgrims and I were engaging in a conversation on life and our Creator’s plans and where we were finding ourselves spiritually, physically, and mentally. We passed the Two Rivers Farm, L’Ormarins Motor Museum, Klein Waterval, and Normandie

farm, which were established in 1693. I found porcupine quills on a stretch of the path and it was draped in a certain way: two pens on top of and across each other (Figure 7.5). To me it symbolises something, as if it was meant for somebody to follow a certain instruction.

I pondered on the draping of the porcupine quills for a while and continued my journey. I came across eight crosses of remembrance and it made me think of my pilgrimage in Spain a few years earlier. There is a distinct purpose for crosses along the Camino in Spain. It signifies death, penance, healing, and cleansing but, for the purpose of my pilgrimage, the crosses I came across on my journey signified death. For a moment the rain paused, and the sun came out from behind the clouds. We were two kilometres away from Franschoek, crossing the Kaiistangrivier. People were moving around, going about their things, before it started to rain again. We entered the town and got a sense of its beauty and tranquillity. We had reached our end destination for this particular day after 23 965 steps, 19.01 kilometres (Figure 7.6), and 4 hours and 18 minutes.

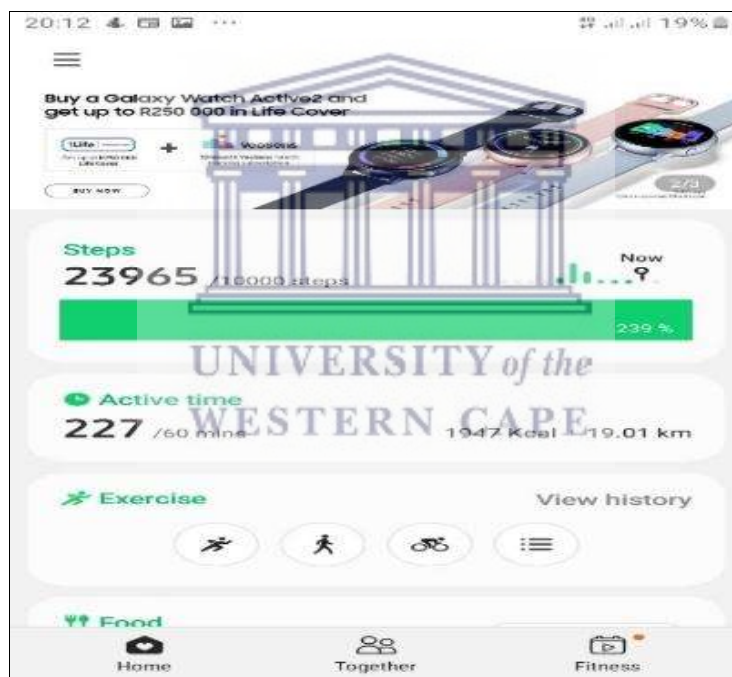


Figure 7.6: Image of number of steps and kilometres

We popped into the “Good Life” coffee shop for some coffee. We had a good day, a good walk, and I could not wait for the next leg of this section of the pilgrimage.

7.4.6 Reflection: Pilgrimage of remembrance: Boschendal to Franschhoek

When you are a walker and pilgrim, sharing becomes one of the most important attributes that gives meaning and purpose to journey. Sharing amongst walkers and pilgrims for the most part of a pilgrimage is non-verbal. The different gestures, whether it be a smile, a nod of acknowledgement, or an elbow gesture (handshake became forbidden gesture because of COVID-19), are more valuable than any form of verbal communication. Let me explain: we have been isolated, isolating, alienated due to COVID-19 restrictions in so many ways, without even realising the effect and impact on the sanity of the human race. The goal and objective were to finish the pilgrimage of Remembrance (Figure 7.5). As a pilgrim, the experience benefits not only physical and mental well-being, but also one's spiritual well-being. As stated, the pilgrimage experience includes body aches but, after a while, something reduces the pain. Even though it is difficult to explain, your attention is drawn away from your sore legs and feet and you are in deep conversation and prayer with the Creator. The day's accomplishment reflects more than just the walk: it also takes into account spiritual growth.

7.5 Pilgrimage: Drakenstein area

Drakenstein is a local municipality located within the Cape Winelands District Municipality in the Western Cape Province of South Africa (Figure 7.7). As of 2011, it had a population of 251 262 across an area of 1 538 km².

Drakenstein is also the first municipal district in South Africa that advocated itself to be sustainable. Its council passed a resolution in 2016 to declare this district a sustainable and fair-trade area. This entailed that its council had to agree that the fair trade resolution would be in compliance with meeting the sustainable development goals. Some of the goals include the following: to act as "a place of excellence," creating, facilitating and promoting an environment for economic growth, and creating opportunities for progress and development for all residents and businesses in Drakenstein. The municipality supports goods produced using fair labour practices and production processes that do no harm to the environment. It supports sustainable development initiatives such as clean air, pristine natural beauty, healthy communities, and businesses that can survive hardships (Drakenstein Municipality, 2021).

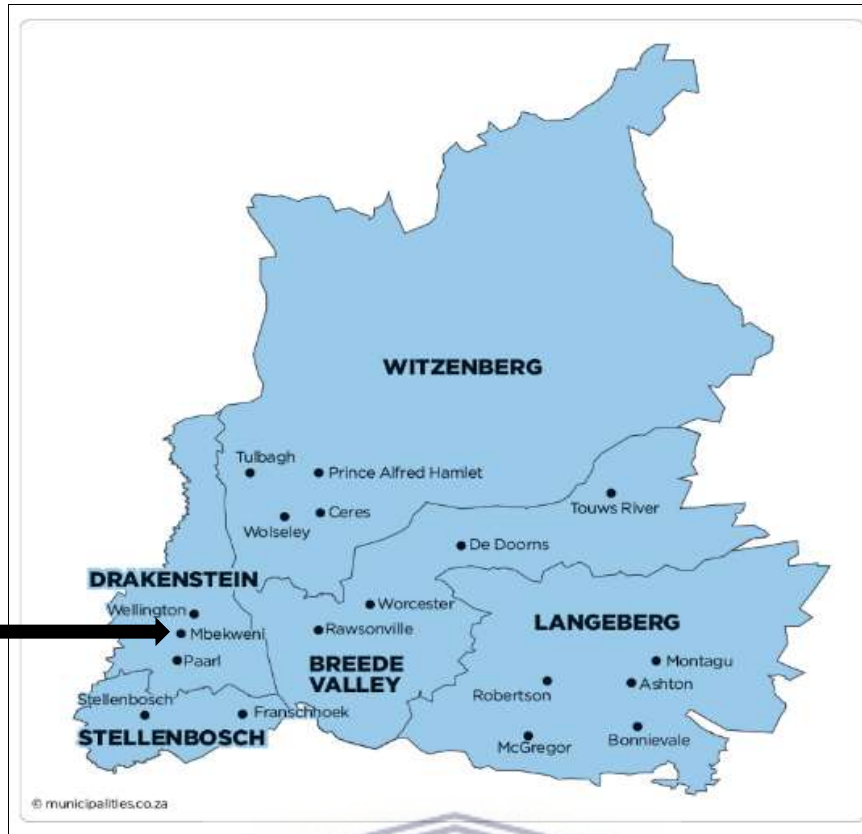


Figure 7.7: Location of Drakenstein district (Source: Cape Winelands District Municipality, n.d.)

7.5.1 Youth Day: Our pilgrimage of remembrance – from Agter-Paarl to Drakenstein-Wemmershoek

Speaking with colleagues and my children about the events of the past few weeks, youngsters either having been murdered, left me with a sad and unsettling feeling of distress. I was thinking of how I could show my discontent and pain in solidarity with what was happening to our young people. I kept on thinking that those young people were the same age as my children and could easily have been mine. What could I do or say to demonstrate that “enough was enough?” The only way I knew of which to react was through walking. Two weeks after we walked the pilgrimage of remembrance (soldiers who passed on), we explored a Youth Day pilgrimage of remembrance. I rallied up a few walkers and decided to make posters, sticking these onto poles, to make visible on my walking journey its dedication to the many youngsters who had passed away in the preceding weeks. One of my children asked me: “What can I do to show that I am there to help, I am there to listen, where do I start?” My response was to find something that you were passionate about and demonstrate your unhappiness about the killings and suicide of your peers. “I will walk for all of them that lost their lives.” My posters

demonstrated the following slogans:” “Gone too soon but we’ll walk their names;” “Gone too soon: Say their names: they matter!”; “Another life taken. We will walk their names;” “Nog ‘n lewe gesteel;”²⁵ “Ons voetstaple roep hul name uit!”,²⁶ and “Nog ‘n lewe uitgedoof. Hulle. Maak. Saak!” (Figure 7.8).²⁷

On Youth Day, a national public holiday, our pilgrimage of remembrance started in a north-easterly direction. It was cold and windy and signs of rain were coming our way. One of my fellow pilgrim’s commented that “it is so cold,” upon which I responded, “when we walk we will start warming up.” Our journey continued in a south-westerly direction and I asked one of my fellow pilgrims, Rambo, to take the first shift carrying the “pole of remembrance” (posters were fitted onto a pole, see Figure 7.8). We helped put the “pole of remembrance” onto his back and it looked like wings. This led me to observe: “Rambo, it almost looks like you are carrying a cross, maybe next time we should make crosses cut out of cardboard and walk with ‘crosses of remembrance.” Upon which he/ she responded: “Yea, true.” He/ she acknowledged my gesture and for a while we walked in silence, everyone keeping to their own thoughts. Our journey was now taking us into an easterly direction, and we came across “stones of remembrance” with these words crafted onto the stones: “Lief jou altyd skat!”²⁸ and “Liefste Dok.”²⁹

We walked past Freedom Village, De Hoop, and Val de Vie and came to another “cross of remembrance.” Our journey continued past Pearl Valley golf course, Freedom Hill, and Cape Fruit Processors. The route was now taking us into a southerly direction passing the Mandela Prison House in Drakenstein. “Walking is part of our existence, part of our life, it is life,” one person from our group mentioned. “We somehow take it for granted but there are so many out there born without being able to walk, not being able to experience taking that first step as a baby,” another responded in turn. “Yes, dis waar,”³⁰ a third member from the group added to the conversation.

²⁵ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “Another life stolen.”

²⁶ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “Our footsteps call their names out.”

²⁷ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “Another life suffocated. They. Do. Matter.”

²⁸ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “Love you always, darling.”

²⁹ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “Dearest Doc.”

³⁰ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “...it’s true.”



Figure 7.8: Youth Day: Pilgrimage of Remembrance – Agter-Paarl – Drakenstein-Wemmershoek

A small frog found its way onto the tar road. I took a photo because the colour of the frog blended in with the colour of the road. I tried getting the baby frog to move out of the way of an oncoming car. “Ek kan nie kyk nie, nee man,³¹ how horrible” responded one of the pilgrims.” Trying to help was useless and too late because the baby frog was instantly killed by the car. We spent a few minutes still debating the last few seconds of the frog’s life and then continued our journey over the Wemmershoek River, now into a south-easterly direction past a camping site, De Hollandsche Molen. The route slowly steered us into a south-easterly direction again as it started to drizzle. One of the pilgrims stated that her feet and body were hurting. She was hinting that her feet did not want to move any further and that they were sending signals to her brain to stop walking. The pilgrim was ready to give up and walk away and was mentally drained as a result of COVID and the 2020 restrictions. She felt better when she started walking. Walking became a healing and stress-relieving activity, to the extent that she could sing and raise her hands to the heavens. The pilgrim could converse with the Creator for a brief moment and felt whole again.

I could see the pain on my fellow pilgrim’s face and my response was that we were not far from our final destination. I could see the road that we had to connect to get there. Passing the

³¹ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “I cannot look, no man.”

Wemmershoek Wetland, we could now see the main road; we had reached our end destination for this particular day, achieving the goal we set ourselves and protesting against the brutal murders and suicide of our young people through walking. That day's pilgrimage walk was special, as I was able to walk and share experiences. Even though my walk was not completed in solitude and silence, I felt a sense of satisfaction that I could share my experience with others and hear their stories. I also felt blessed about the fact that I had the opportunity to walk more than the average person. We dedicated our 24 693 steps, 19.25 kilometres (Figure 7.9), or 4 hours and 8 minutes to the youngsters who had lost their lives during the preceding few weeks.



Figure 7.9: Image of number of steps and kilometres

7.5.2 Reflection: Youth Day: Our pilgrimage of remembrance – from Agter-Paarl to Drakenstein-Wemmershoek

This pilgrimage walk was filled with a plethora of feelings. The purpose of the walk was to honour, as indicated, youths who had passed away in 2020. Figure 7.8 illustrates the motivation behind the pilgrimage. The Pilgrimage of remembrance was marked by grief and rage, becoming a walk full of compensation, but also a walk full of sincerity and hope. The bad weather was a real test, especially on this particular day, and for a few moments one's mood was as sombre as the weather. For a single moment, you had to re-engage with yourself, telling

yourself that today was not about you. This was a day on which the pilgrims were also walking for their families. Walking helps to heal, cleanse, and allows you to grieve. Walking also, in this instance, provided one with the opportunity and time to reflect and connect with one's Creator. The purpose of this particular pilgrimage was to demonstrate sympathy and empathy with society by carrying the "pole of remembrance." The response of the drivers and people passing by hooting in agreement gave us the sense that we were not alone on this journey. We accomplished what we set out to do with our pilgrimage demonstration.

7.5.3 Pilgrimage of Prayer: Paarl – Paarl Mountain Nature Reserve

Our journey continued for four weeks after we had walked our pilgrimage on Youth Day on a beautiful sunny day, with no signs of the rather gloomy and cold winter's day of the day before. The air felt crispy and nippy, but it was still a beautiful day, with many cyclists, runners, and walkers out and about. For this particular leg of our journey, we started in a north-easterly direction in Jan Phillip's Mountain Drive. The distance to be covered entailed a combination of mountain and urban walking. The route took us into a southerly direction towards Victoria Dam, from where we walked in a north-southerly direction, eventually reaching a picnic area called Meulwater Camp where we took a break. We discovered a gated garden with benches and tables and a river with many short walking trails. We spent a few minutes in the garden and were amazed by how beautiful it was. This led me to observe again to my fellow pilgrims/walkers that our country had so many hidden gems that there was in fact no need to travel abroad. We had everything right on our own doorstep.

We left the Meulwater picnic site, continued in a southerly direction, and came across a waterfall where an elderly man was sitting. After asking us where we were from, he continued to inform us that he was from the surrounding area, adding that he often visited the waterfall. We explained that we were walkers/ pilgrims and hikers. He continued by also telling us about his travels through the whole of South Africa in the 1980s, as well as all the places where he and his family had hiked and walked. We in turn responded by commenting how fortunate he had been and that we were not in a position to do that because of apartheid. He came across as somewhat bemused for a few seconds, until one of us explained our pre-1994 experiences. He offered to take a few pictures of us after which we thanked him and pursued our journey.

On our path we came across die “Plek van Gebed” (place used for praying),³² which was decorated with 25 crosses (Figure 7.11). Yet, this time round, the crosses did not represent a remembrance of death but promised of the Creator’s word. A few of these crosses displayed specific biblical texts, such as Isaiah 62:6 (“Wagte op die muur”³³) and Matthew 11:28, 29, 30 (Kom na my toe almal wat vermoeid en belas is, en Ek sal julle rus gee. Neem my juk op en julle en leer van My want Ek is sagmoedig en nederig van hart en julle sal rus vind vir julle siele, want my juk is sag en my las is lig. Niks is ontmoontlik vir die Hemelse Vader nie”).³⁴ In addition, many other Bible verses were on display reflecting messages such as “die Hemelse Vader genees,” “Geduld,” “Nederigheid,” “Vriendelikheid,” “Getrouheid”³⁵, “Goedhartigheid,”³⁶ and more. We spent a few minutes looking at the display of crosses and what it stood for. This led one in the group to comment on what a nice place this was to come and pray, a place where you were surrounded by mountains and tranquillity. She thereupon asked if she could pray, and we agreed that it was fine. She prayed and we continued our journey in a southerly direction. We walked for a few kilometres and discovered a big cross mounted onto the wall of a dam. We passed Uitkyk Farm and Keurfontein Estate, walked past the Gymnasium high school, which was established in 1858. On the main road of Paarl, one finds beautiful churches. Even though these churches were very old, they stood out among all the other buildings we passed. The historical buildings were evidence of the rich history of Paarl. The first church we walked past was established in 1904; the second, the “Toringkerk”³⁷ (Figure 7.10), in 1907, inaugurated on 6 March 1907: since 1982 it has been acknowledged as a National Monument by the National Monuments Council. The National Monuments Council was replaced by the South African Heritage Resources Agency, SAHRA, at the end of March 2000. The church can seat 2 000 persons and the height of its tower is 57 metres. The next

³² Translation from Afrikaans to English: “Place of Prayer.”

³³ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “Guards on the wall.”

³⁴ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “Come to me all who are weary and I will give you rest. Take up my yoke, and ye shall learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls: for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. Nothing is impossible for the Heavenly Father.”

³⁵ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “The Heavenly Father heals,” “Patience,” “Humility,” “Kindness,” “Faithfulness.”

³⁶ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “Faithfulness.”

³⁷ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “Tower Church.”

church we arrived at was the Holy Trinity Angelical Church, a beautiful small church established in 1896 (Figure 7.10).

Lastly, we walked past the “Strooidak”³⁸ church, erected in 1805, and unique for our journey, given the way it was surrounded by graves. This discovery led one of my fellow pilgrims to mention that this phenomenon of graves was mostly noticeable in countryside towns and that it was not a common thing in the suburbs. After spending a few minutes at the church and admiring the architecture of the building, we continued our journey.



Figure 7.10: Pilgrimage of prayer: Paarl

We had been walking on the tar road for a few kilometres and everyone was feeling his/ her aching feet. “My boots praat met my voete,”³⁹ was a remark from one of the pilgrims. The others responded: “my feet are killing me today,” which made me realise how important the right footgear for a specific environment was. I normally carried an extra pair of walking shoes with me but, for some or other reason, had I journeyed without an extra pair on this day. My feet were burning and my thighs experienced a discomfoting sensation, all because of not wearing the proper shoes for urban walking. One of the pilgrims asked whether we could find a place for coffee in order for our bodies to recover and re-energise. Three men were walking

³⁸ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “Thatched roof.”

³⁹ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “My boots talk to my feet.”

towards us, and we agreed that we would ask them where the closest coffee shop was. One of the men responded in a friendly manner: “sisters, net anderkant die robot,”⁴⁰ and we were happy.

It was Sunday, and most of the shops and coffee shops were closed. We commented that one could see that this was a countryside town, where shops were closed on a Sunday or were closing very early on a Sunday. We started walking fast and aggressively to complete our journey for this day, and hoped this would make the soreness of our feet disappear. On the opposite side of the street, a man was shouting, and I had to turn back to hear what he was saying, because the mask on his face was obstructing the sound that came out of his mouth. He repeated himself: “you are strong women.” Nevertheless, it was hard to imagine that our strength in that moment lay in our aching thighs and feet. We continued our journey and came across a “Rock of Remembrance” which commemorated the “Voortrekker Eeufees”⁴¹ and the ox wagons’ arrival on 10 August 1838 as well as the 50th commemoration of the arrival of the ox wagons on 30 August 1988 in Paarl. After 29 910 steps, 23.33 kilometres (Figure 7.11), or 4 hours and 7 minutes, we decided that our journey for the day would end at that point.

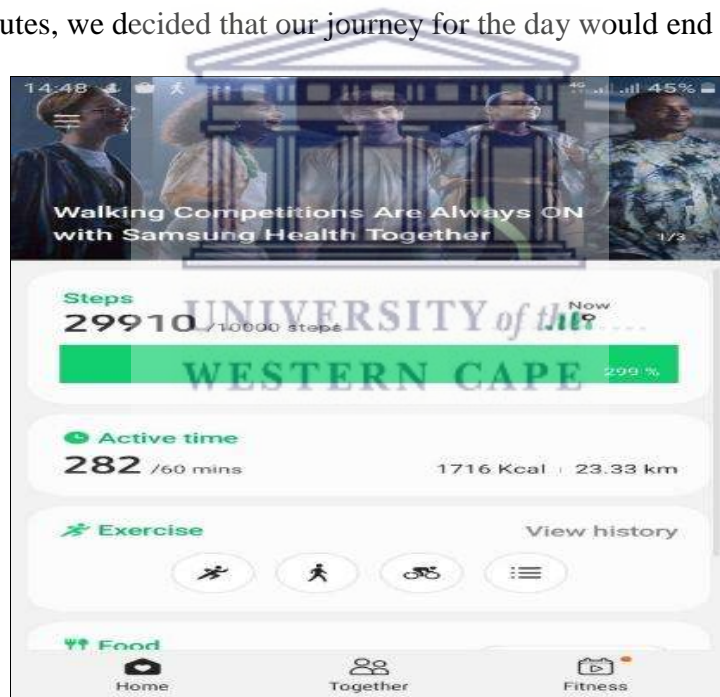


Figure 7.11: Image of number of steps taken and kilometres covered

“Apple cider in lukewarm water would help for the aching feet,” I announced. We exchanged more ideas and recipes around how to care for our feet and stopped for the day.

⁴⁰ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “Sisters, just beyond the robot.”

⁴¹ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “Voortrekker Centenary.”

7.5.4 Reflection: Pilgrimage of prayer: Paarl – Paarl Mountain Nature Reserve

This path brought with it a range of emotions and feelings. The environment created a sense of calmness and peacefulness that gave meaning to the journey. One of the characteristics of a conventional pilgrimage is to walk to a church or a place of prayer. The idea was to incorporate this traditional aspect with the personalised pilgrimage. The purpose of the pilgrimage was to find the “place of prayer” (Figure 7.11), which would enhance the meaning of the walk. The walk/ pilgrimage provided an opportunity for us to discuss and debate numerous topics, including where the country was heading and how the address during COVID of the South African president, Cyril Ramaphosa, affected every single individual in South Africa. Even though we agreed that we would enjoy our journey of the day without engaging in political debates, it made its way into it. One or two of the pilgrims lost their jobs as a result of the virus. As part of this pilgrimage, one could not help but join in the conversation around this. The pilgrims formed a relationship as a result of these common interests. They were able to interact with such comfort because they shared a common passion in walking. The journey was to find the place of prayer and complete the day’s journey. In the traditional sense, a pilgrimage is further characterised by the pilgrim’s level of endurance. The accomplishment was achieving our goal. The goal was to complete the number of kilometres and steps walked during the journey.

7.6 Pilgrimage: Witzenberg area

Witzenberg is a local municipality within the ambit of the Cape Winelands District Municipality in South Africa’s Western Cape Province. Witzenberg covers an area of 10 753 km² on Route 62, and is part of the Cape Winelands District, which includes the five towns of Ceres, Tulbagh, Wolseley, Op-die-Berg, and Prince Alfred’s Hamlet (Figure 7.12).

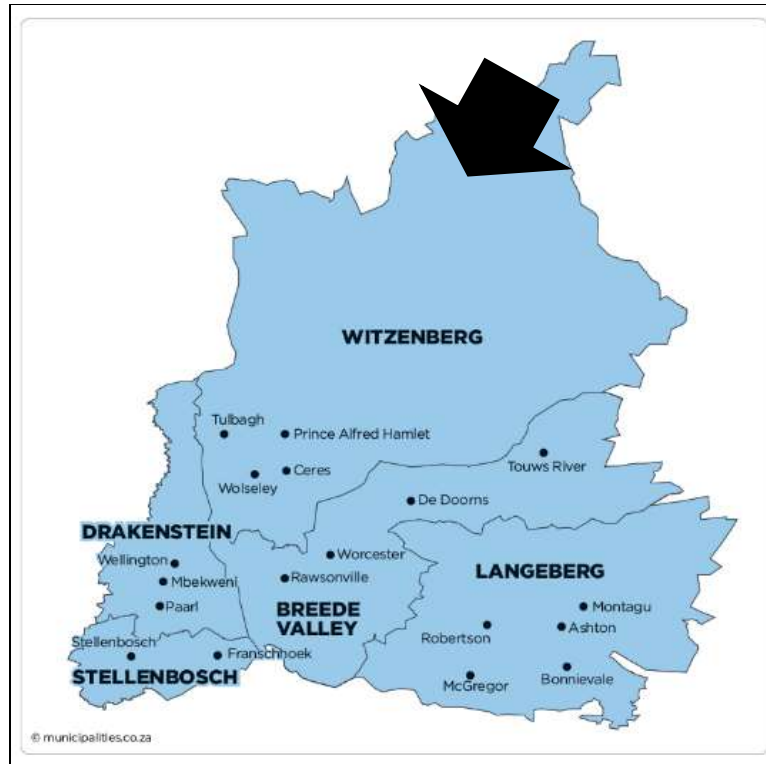


Figure 7.12: Location of Witzenberg district (Source: Cape Winelands District Municipality, n.d.)

This scenic valley is known across the world for producing high-quality fruit, vegetables, and wine. Olives, grain, cattle, and pork are also produced in the region. Witzenberg has situated itself as a family tourist attraction as well as an adventure tourism gateway. The municipality offers cultural and archaeological tours, hiking, 4x4 routes, and abseiling, engaging with fauna and flora, as well as freshwater fishing. Mountain bike trails, Bushmen rock paintings, game and nature reserves, stargazing, birding, and cherry and fig picking are among the activities that one can enjoy in the Witzenberg district (Witzenberg Municipality, 2021). The town of Tulbagh is located in a valley surrounded by the Witzenberg Mountains, and the Vista Great Winterhoek Mountain (Murludi, 2021). The scenic valley around the settlement of Wolsley is surrounded by the spectacular Waaihoek, Wizen, and Waterval Mountains (Wolsley Tourism, 2021).

7.6.1 *Tulbagh to Wolsley: A pilgrimage for you!*

“Did you not read the no entry sign? Did you not see the no disturb sign?” Death knocked and invaded our space. Without any response to its knock, death stole a pillar, a father, a husband, a grandfather, a friend, a sibling, and a cousin. What do you say to the loved ones to ease the pain? How do you sympathise and say the right comforting words? “So, this pilgrimage I walk

for you, today I dedicate my steps and my pilgrimage to you because that is the only way I could express my feelings. We will never be able to walk that Camino we spoke of, no more conversations about investments and the complication of life.” The humbleness of walking allows you to experience a connection with anyone that crosses your path. Have you ever experienced that feeling when you meet someone, start talking, and feel comfortable with the conversation? My friend that passed on was that kind of person.

On that day my pilgrimage journey started in Tulbagh a week after we had walked the pilgrimage of prayer. It is a beautiful town that finds itself located in a valley surrounded by mountains. How unique was creation: we had had rain over the preceding few days and on this day there was not a single sign of the cold weather and rain. The landscape was green; it was a perfect, sunny day, a perfect day for a pilgrimage to celebrate life. There was a sense of unsettledness amongst my fellow pilgrims that morning, a dark aura that found itself amongst us. I could not remember when last a disagreement had been experienced amongst the regular pilgrims, but it had infiltrated moods and emotions. A few words were exchanged and then there was an awkward silence. I started humming a song by Cece Winans: “The Goodness of the Creator is running after me...” This had become my go-to song when I was vulnerable and when I needed the presence of the Creator. I recalled the past few weeks where people had died because of COVID, people that were and were being infected by the virus. This included family and friends close to me, which made me feel fragile and left my soul troubled. That day I walked, knowing: “James, I walk for you today. William, today I walk for you. Joachim, today I walk for you. Auntie Mienie, today I walk for you. Kevin, today I walk for you. Sam, today I will walk for you.”

That day’s pilgrimage took us into a south-westerly direction away from the valley of Tulbagh. For a few kilometres we all walked in silence, everyone occupied with his/ her thoughts. I was thinking about James’ funeral, which I had attended two days prior to the pilgrimage and how I was able then to feel and smell the pain of everyone attending. I was thinking of how brittle it made me feel: my soul feeling naked and exposed. The pastor read from 2 Corinthians 5 and his sermon was comforting. His sermon showed that, when we die, we move from mortality to immortality, while we in this world are the individuals left behind. We find ourselves in a temporary dwelling, which the pastor compared to tenting. When we pass on, we move to something more permanent: we enter the Kingdom of the Creator.

Winterhoek road is the main one in Tulbagh from where we started our pilgrimage for that specific day, and it extended into Van der Stel Sint road, which connected with the R46. We walked via Van der Stel Sint road, and I noticed that the silence was broken: everyone was admiring the typology of the landscape, chirping away, and there was a switch of mood and emotions. One of the pilgrims confirmed that the environment was beautiful and peaceful, while another pilgrim said that she felt better and had needed the walk. According to another, the week before had been too much for her, and she said that she felt like the living were walking amongst the dead. A fellow pilgrim wanted to know when everything would return to normal in this time of COVID. One of the pilgrims responded that we should ask the Creator for protection and grace. Another agreed that our faith should be bigger than our fear.

I normally count the number of crosses on the road. I did not find one single cross while walking the Van der Stel Sint road, and this I mentioned to my fellow pilgrims. They agreed that this was strange because, wherever we walked, we would come across so many crosses (people who had died on a path/ road). We conversed about it for a while and continued our journey, which took us into the R46. We found a place to sit down at and took a breakfast break. One of the pilgrims said that she was thankful and blessed to be able to walk and experience the Tulbagh to Wolseley pilgrimage.

COVID affected so many lives and we were humbled by how privileged we were. One of the pilgrims checked her phone and informed us that another colleague died. A year after COVID had been introduced into the world, and so many had died and so many had become infected, as if there was a pattern to this madness. After the news about the colleague that died, Letta was questioning the purpose of life, and Pam agreed that the pilgrims should walk for the colleague who had died too. While we were walking, I received a message that we needed to keep my aunt and cousin in the walkers' prayers, because they were hospitalised, and my aunt was not doing well. Fifteen minutes later, we continued our journey on the R46 in the direction of Ceres. We came across our first cross of remembrance: in fact, we came across a few crosses of remembrance (Figure 7.13) and, even though it saddened me, there was a form of peacefulness and solitude that surrounded them.

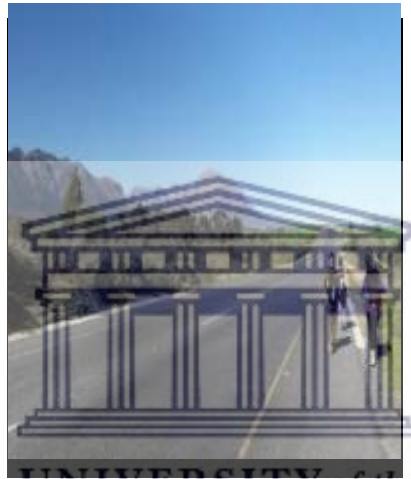


Figure 7.13: Crosses of remembrance: R46

Perhaps because of the location of the crosses of remembrance, which were surrounded by mountains of the Witzenberg area. Two of the mountain peaks were covered with snow dust: what a picturesque occasion!

We continued for a few kilometres, crossed the Boontjies River and stopped at the Fynbos Farm Stall, Guesthouse and Animal Sanctuary, located in the “Valley of Abundance,” the Witzenberg valley, which is on the border of Tulbagh and Ceres (Figure 7.14).

The owners were friendly and offered us what they were producing and selling. We were welcomed by Duke, their Great Dane, and the owners told us how COVID affected their business. They were wondering if the president would announce, on a national address scheduled for the following day, a hard-core lockdown (Level 5): it would be catastrophic for them with all the stock they had available for sale.



Figure 7.14: Fynbos Farm Stall, Duke, Boontjies River

The two owners, Piet and Pierrie, asked us, “where you from, and what are brought you here to our humble establishment?” One of the pilgrims responded that we started our journey in Tulbagh and were walking to Wolseley, upon which another responded that it was important to share the purpose of our pilgrimage. “We have decided to walk this pilgrimage in remembrance of close friends and family that passed on in the past 10 days,” one of the fellow pilgrims added. Pierre responded that we should not only walk for the loved ones who had passed on but also to celebrate life. Momentarily, all pain and sadness vanished from our minds, and for that moment the only thing important to us was to enjoy the beautiful day and the beautiful people sharing stories, people that then included Piet and Pierre.

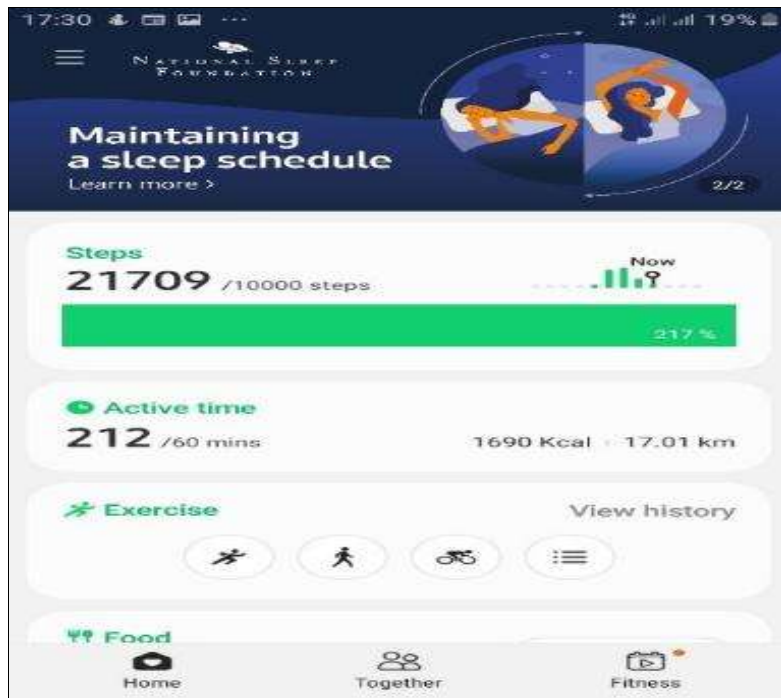


Figure 7.15: Image of number of steps taken and kilometres covered

Our journey continued to Wolseley. After 21 709 steps, 17.01 kilometres, or 3 hours and 53 minutes, we had completed our pilgrimage in remembrance of James, William, Joachim, Auntie Mienie, and Kevin (Figure 7.16). “Rus sag.”⁴²

7.6.2 Reflection: Tulbagh to Wolseley: A pilgrimage for you!

As in the cases of the other routes that we had explored, this one contributed a unique atmosphere and deliverables. Surrounded by mountains, crossing rivers and the green valleys while walking created a time bubble where, for the moment, you could embrace solitude. It was as if one was excluded from the ugliness of the world, as if time stood still, and nothing else mattered for that moment. I found walking with my three fellow pilgrims more intense and loaded with so many emotions and feelings. Even though it started out with a situation where everyone was dealing with anger, sadness, and pain, the pilgrims could later share these with each other and move forward. I realised once again that walking and pilgrimage had healing powers: it allowed the individual to mourn and recover from a dark place. In the case of the Tulbagh to Wolseley walk the pilgrimage had a greater effect on our mental and psychological than one the physical state of well-being (Figure 7.16). The goal of this pilgrimage was to honour and mourn those who had died as a result of COVID. Walking helped me manage my

⁴² Translation from Afrikaans to English: “Rest gently.”

emotions and feelings, which made the journey more valuable. The cleansing and healing, as well as the number of kilometres and steps walked, became important factors in achieving our objectives.



Figure 7.16: A pilgrimage for you!

7.6.3 Journey of the bed socks: Prince Alfred to Ceres

Every journey and every pilgrimage pursued within the Cape Winelands area was unique. The journey from Prince Alfred Hamlet to Ceres, after the pilgrimage from Tulbagh to Wolseley, a month later, brought so much value to my narrative. There was just something unique and special about the locals residing in the countryside. There was a humbleness about these people, and they were friendly and eager to help and steer you in the right direction. I had to use a toilet and for one to use Prince Alfred Hamlet’s public toilets you needed to pay. The gated door had a coin slot where you needed to insert a two-rand coin to access the toilet. I did not know this, but one of the locals offered me the coin; I am embarrassed to say that I had no hard cash on me. Even though I promised to find an ATM (Automated Teller Machine) to refund her, she responded, “moenie worry nie, dit is ok.”⁴³All I could do was to thank her, telling that she

⁴³ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “Don’t worry, it is ok.”

would be blessed. The little town of Prince Alfred Hamlet was surrounded by mountains and some of these mountain peaks were covered with snow. A picture could not capture the 360-degree view that only the eye could see.



Figure 7.17: Pictures of Ant Sanna, Ant Anna, and Ester

This was where I met three local residents: Ant Sanna, Ant Anna, and Ester (Figure 7.17). I had been knitting bed socks over the preceding past few weeks to relax my mind, and I decided that I would distribute them as I walked my journey from Prince Alfred Hamlet to Ceres (Figure 7.18).

I offered Ant Sanna a pair, and she accepted it gladly and thanked me for them. I walked further and offered a pair to Ant Anna, who also said: “Julle moet mooi loop en baie dankie.”⁴⁴ We walked for a few kilometres and found ourselves on the boundary of Prince Alfred Hamlet, where we met Ester. “Afrikaans of English,” we asked, and she responded by saying “English.” I asked her if I could give her a pair of bed socks. She replied in the affirmative, but I could see that she was a bit hesitant to say yes. I asked her permission to take a picture, and she agreed. That day, there were only two pilgrims to explore the journey. We continued, and I mentioned to my fellow pilgrim that it was a beautiful day and that one could smell and feel the peacefulness.

⁴⁴ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “You have to walk nicely and thank you very much.”



Figure 7.18: Pictures of Prince Alfred Hamlet

We walked past a few farms and met up with Vanessa, a local resident. She saw us across the road, shouting: “Waantoe gaan julle”⁴⁵ I replied: “Ons stap Ceres toe,”⁴⁶ upon which she responded: “Ek stap saam.”⁴⁷ She was a person with an interesting story, a 32-year-old seasonal worker, a mother of two, and a grandmother of a one-year-old baby girl. Her parents hailed from the town of Springbok in the Northern Cape but had migrated to Ceres in search of a better future for their family and for better job opportunities. They became farm workers. Vanessa lost her mother two years before and badly wanted to go back to Springbok. However, the opportunities for jobs were almost non-existent. She proudly explained that she left school when she was in grade 11; her wish was to earn R 250.00 per day to give her daughter a party. For a moment she forgot about her pain and problems and focused on my fellow pilgrim by saying that the two of us were rich. I asked her why she would say that, and her response was: “Ek kan sien.”⁴⁸ This led us to try to convince her that we were not rich, but blessed. I had walked so many routes that made me realise how blessed I was. Maybe it was the way we interacted with her, but we never judged her and in fact encouraged her to complete school, because education was the key to survival. “Hoekom stap julle?”⁴⁹, she asked. My response

⁴⁵ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “Where are you going?”

⁴⁶ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “We are walking to Ceres.”

⁴⁷ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “I am walking along.”

⁴⁸ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “I can see.”

⁴⁹ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “Why do you walk?”

was that we enjoyed nature and the outdoors. I asked her the same question, and tears appeared in her eyes when she answered: “Ek stap want ek wil al myself doodgemaak het.”⁵⁰ My words of encouragement to her were that she still needed to take care of her children. She had the good fortune of being able to walk and clear her head. I told her that she needed to ask the Creator for healing and protection. She was telling us that she was going to Bella Vista, one of the local communities between Prins Alfred Hamlet and Ceres (Figure 7.19) to see her father and sister. She wanted us to join her, but we were on a tight schedule and told her that this was not possible on that day.



Figure 7.19: Pictures of Bella Vista Primary School and the community of Bella Vista

She wanted us to visit her and come see her and attend her baby girl’s birthday. We said our goodbyes, and each went their separate ways. Our journey continued in the direction of Skoonvlei, an agricultural community, and the community of Vreeland. We entered the periphery of Ceres; saw the fire station (Figure 7.20) and I was thinking what a beautiful location it was for it. Here I came across my first cross of remembrance (Figure 7.20), and I felt a sense of relief that only one person had lost his/ her life on this route in comparison to

⁵⁰ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “I walk because I’ve had the urge already to kill myself.”

the other routes I had walked where five people had lost their lives. The one cross represented the five names, as depicted in Figure 7.20.



Figure 7.20: Picture of the Ceres fire station and cross of remembrance

We walked over the bridge in the main road of Ceres, crossed a river, and came across a statue of remembrance “ter gedagtenis aan honderd jaar van genade”⁵¹ (1855-1955). The beautiful town of Ceres was discovered in 1849 (Figure 7.21). We had come to the end of our journey for the day, completing 16 632 steps, 13.1 kilometres, or 2 hours and 3 minutes’ worth of time (Figure 7.21).

⁵¹ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “Memory of a hundred years of grace”.

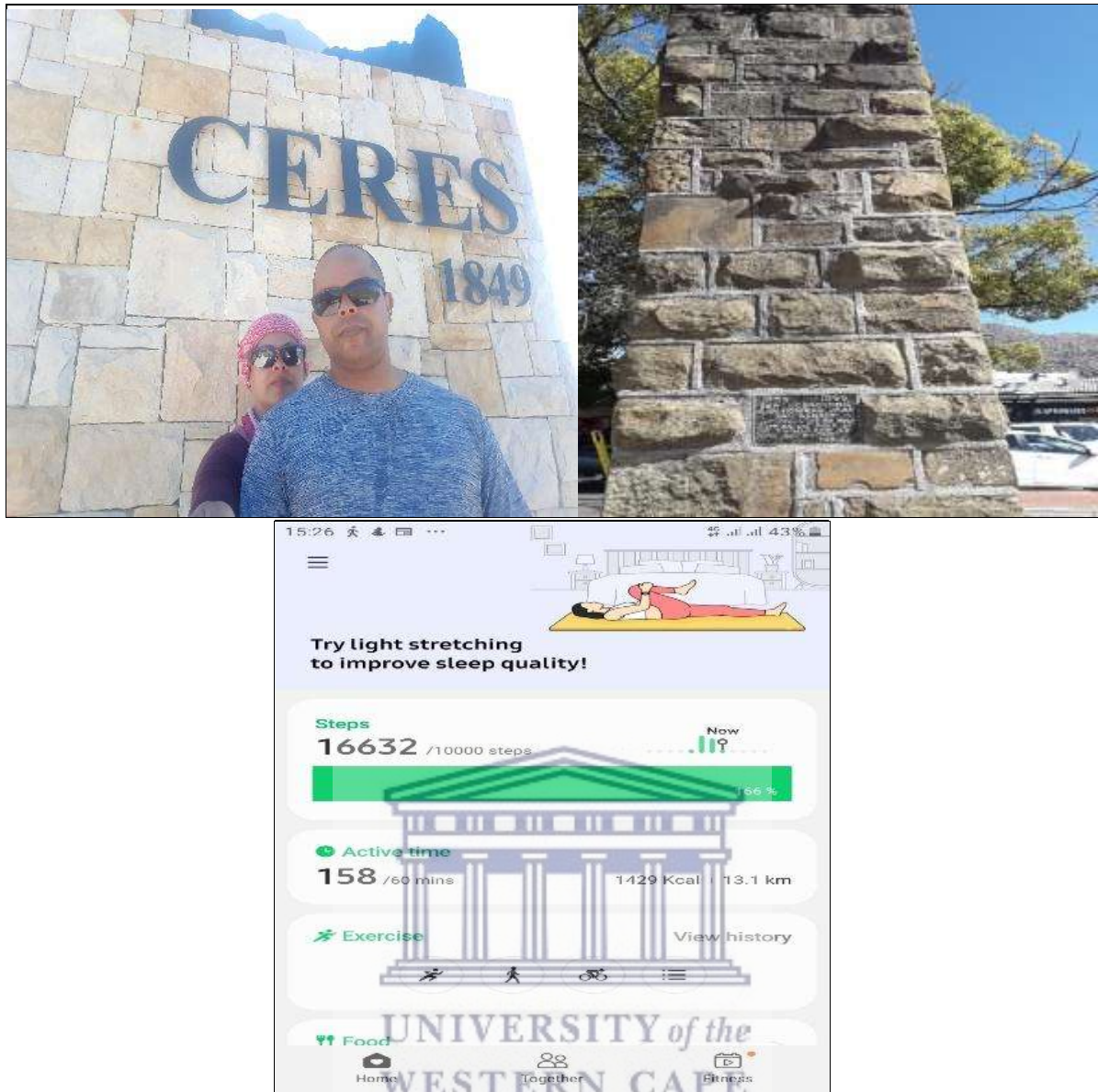


Figure 7.21: Pictures of Ceres and memory of a hundred years of grace & number of steps and kilometres

7.6.4 Reflection: Journey of the bed socks: Prince Alfred to Ceres

During this journey I realised again that our basic needs were the same whether we lived in the city or countryside, and that hunger had no face or colour. We are what we are and who we are because of our support system. I learned to engage with others without any reservations. It might not only improve that person's perspective of the human race, but it may also restore that person's human dignity. On my journey, I discovered that there was a significant disparity between those from the suburbs/ city and those from the countryside or rural areas. It was as if people in rural or remote regions had distinct spiritual ideals and beliefs, more so than people in cities or/ and urban places. Despite the fact that the outskirts of Ceres appeared to be

impoverished, the locals were warmer in nature. These places had so many stories to tell, and all one needed to do as an outsider was to make more time to listen and engage in conversation. Walking from Prince Alfred Hamlet (Figure 7.18) to Ceres – a picturesque old town (Figure 7.21) – led to a comfortable attitude; people walked the distance and stopped for a chat, continue their journey, then stop for more chats, as if time was not a concern, and as if time was slowing down for them, waiting for them to proceed forward. The goal of this pilgrimage was to interact with locals and distribute bed socks. Because of the friendliness of the locals, the bed socks were well received. Distributing bed socks not only gave meaning to our journey, but it gave positive input for the recipients. We completed the number of kilometres and steps while putting a smile on the faces of those who received them.

7.7 Pilgrimage: Breede Valley area

The personalised journey continued a month after the pilgrimage of the bed socks had been walked, at Breede Valley Municipality, a local municipality in the Cape Winelands District Municipality. It has a total size of 3 833 km² and it includes towns such as De Doorns, Rawsonville, Touws River, and Worcester (Figure 7.22).

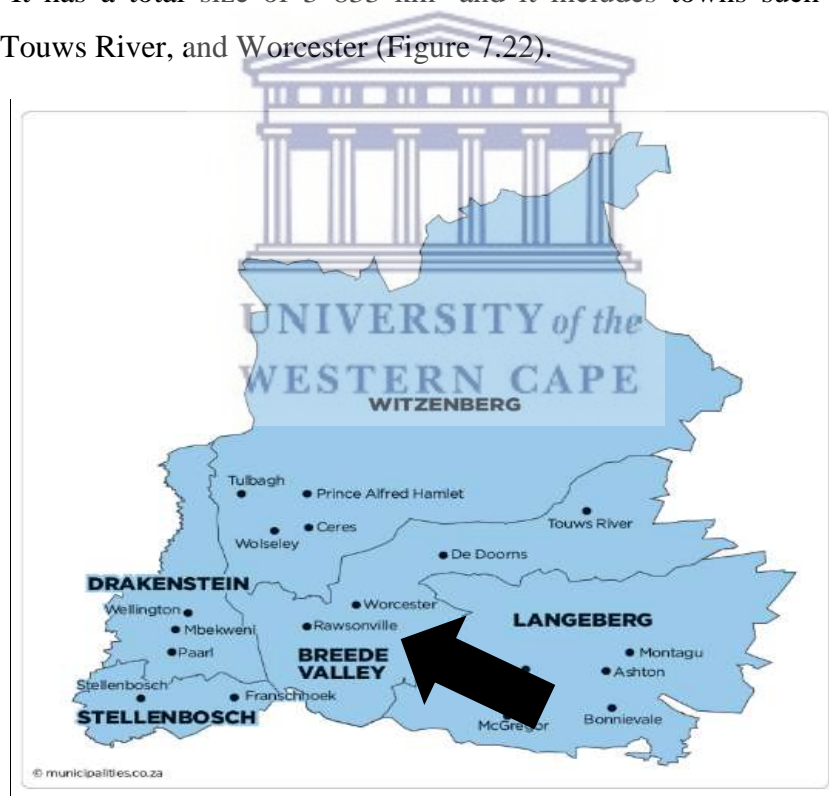


Figure 7.22: Location of Breede Valley area (Source: Cape Winelands District Municipality, n.d.)

The Breede Valley district is bounded to the north by Witzenberg, to the south by Langeberg, to the east by the Central Karoo District, and to the west by Drakenstein and Stellenbosch. It is

one of the district's five municipalities. The Breede Valley's most noticeable characteristic is its scenic splendour, which includes towering mountains, rich valleys, vineyards, and wide plains covered in indigenous semi-desert vegetation (Municipalities Overview, 2021).

7.7.1 Pilgrimage of faith: Slanghoek to Rawsonville

The movement of walking is my solitude, the movement, as Psalm 118:24 states, is “the day the Lord has made.” This psalm centres on the Creator in a movement that expresses gratitude, admiration, joy, and praise. Psalm 118: 24 relates to every day that is given to us as a unique opportunity. For me, movement creates the opportunity to experience solitude. Five pilgrims started the journey on the R101 in a north north-westerly direction on the Slanghoek road. The movement on foot that day was a conversation about faith and how our faith should be bigger than our fear. Even though my fellow pilgrims and I belonged to different denominations, we agreed that our faith in the Creator should not segregate or divide our beliefs. The discussion centred on confessing to the Creator that our trust in human beings superseded our trust in him. We realised that, whenever we pursued a pilgrimage, debates in the beginning were centred on COVID, vaccine or no vaccine. This was the kind of conversation that consumed the members of the group for the first few kilometres. We moved forward as we followed our footsteps and talked about the journey on foot. We walked past Nuwehoop Winery, Gevonden farm, and Deetlefs Wine Estate (founded in 1822, Figure 7.23) and entered the town of Rawsonville.



Figure 7.23: Pictures of Nuwehoop Winery and Deetlefs Winery

We turned down Van Riebeeck road, which was the main road into Rawsonville and walked in a south-westerly direction. I looked at the old buildings, including the one where the office

of Breedekloof Wine and Tourism had been established in 1947, and the Dutch Reformed Church (1878) hall, which was established in. It gave me hope that I could still look at it after so many decades: that it was still standing.

We walked over the Smalblaar River located on the border of Rawsonville when one of our fellow pilgrims turned back. This made us stop in our tracks, so as to see where she was heading. She found her way back to an elderly couple who was crossing the bridge over the Smalblaar River and kneeled down to tie the old woman's shoelaces, after which she joined us again. Yet, one minute later, she stopped again. We were at that moment passing a PEP-store (a local clothing shop) when our fellow pilgrim drew our attention to an old woman covered in faeces. She expressed her intention to buy the woman a pair of clean pants, which made us all turn around. We bought her clothing, soap, facecloth, Vaseline, baby powder, undergarment, and shoes. We took her into a public toilet where she could wash with our help, because she was not even capable of doing that. One of the pilgrims washed and dressed her. At one point, the old woman broke down in tears, telling us that she could not remember when last she wore and could afford an undergarment, socks, and shoes. Her shoe size was a number three, and at that time she was wearing a pair of men's shoes that was a size eight that had been shredded to pieces. The pants she wore were also those of a man. I was emotional with humbleness, feeling grateful to have a roof over our head, food in our cupboards and that I could open a drawer to take out clothing. The old woman's tears were not ones of sadness but of happiness. An undergarment and a pair of shoes rendered her some sense of dignity.

I walked to one of the local supermarkets and bought a few groceries, knowing that it would not last that long but for a minute; the elderly couple had something to eat. She told us that she suffered from high blood pressure and the state of her body sort of confirmed that. It was evident that she had experienced some stroke in the way in which her foot was dragging. Her speech slurred, and she was unable to use one of her arms and hands. She did not have an identity document and could not apply for a grant without it. She had no money to go to a clinic or day hospital for medication, but still had a smile on her face.

The elderly couple had to cross the street to get to the other side to make their way home and, because of her slow movement; it would take them forever to cross the busy street. I told her to lean on me and the other pilgrims stopped the cars for them to cross the street. When they got to the other side, I gave her my hiking stick as support, and told her that it would help when she walked or moved around. They could not express their gratitude enough. My response was

“Ek doen nie dit om bedank te word nie, julle moet die Hemelse Vader dankie sê.”⁵² I looked back at the two: they sat down on the ground and started eating some of the food I had bought. This image would stay with me for a long time.



Figure 7.24: Pictures of the elderly couple and the Smalblaar River

Our journey continued and, as we were still talking about the two old people, another old woman joined us and started talking about the Creator’s grace. She was chirping away as if she knew us and as if she was part of this pilgrimage, speaking about her only granddaughter. “Ja nee, sy is ‘n baie slim kind, het by Goudini hoërskool skool gegaan, maar sy is gebore met ‘n hartprobleem. In haar matriekjaar toe sy eksamen moes skryf was sy baie siek, sy het 14 sertifikate gekry, sy is ‘n baie slim kind. Toe kan sy nie eksamen skryf nie en moes die volgende jaar skryf, maar op die dag wat sy moes skryf toe moet sy gaan vir die operasie, ai die arme kind, my enigste kleindogter.”⁵³ I was thinking about how a stranger could connect with you and feel so comfortable sharing personal information despite not knowing one at all.

⁵² Translation from Afrikaans to English: “I do not do this to be thanked: you need to thank the Heavenly Father.”

⁵³ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “Yes no, she is a very smart child, went to school at Goudini High School, but she was born with a heart problem. In her matric year when she had to write exams she was very ill, she got 14 certificates; she is a very smart child. Then she could not write exams and had to write the following year, but on the day on which she had to write then she had to go for the operation, oh, the poor child, my only granddaughter.”

The other pilgrims walked ahead as the woman continued her conversation with me, telling me that her granddaughter was not involved with the wrong crowd and had a lot of potential, but was working in a Spaza shop. Before she turned away, these were her words: “Ons moet bid vir mekaar, ons moet bid vir ons kinders en kleinkinders en familie, ek sal bid vir jou familie, kinders en kleinkinders”⁵⁴ and, with that, we parted from each other. This brought me to the realisation of how we had so far on our different pilgrimage routes come across different people with different stories and how comfortable people felt to share these with us.

Then, five kilometres away from Rawsonville CBD (central business district), we met two elderly women (Figure 7.25). The one walked so slowly that she was literally putting one foot in front of the other. We asked them where they were heading, whereupon they told us that they were on their way to Rawsonville to shop. Walking was their means of transport, and one could see that this was not a strange concept to them. We told each other that, at the pace that they were walking, they would get home after dark. Even though their movement was as slow as that of a snail, there was no rush, nothing chased them, and it was as if they were complacent with the speed they were walking at. They were happy and smiling and the one old woman commented: “Ek het nie ‘n man wat vir my wag nie, ons stap en het ons eie tyd.”⁵⁵ One of the pilgrims commented that, if she had a car, she would have taken them to Rawsonville. I asked them in turn if I could take a photo of them and they eagerly agreed. We parted from each other, and I thanked my Creator for my many blessings.

Our journey continued. On every pilgrimage, as indicated, I recorded the number of crosses of remembrance on our path but on that day I only came across one of these (Figure 7.26). The boy that had lost his life was only six years old, and the questions amongst the pilgrims were why at that spot and what had happened, and we came up with a version that perhaps he had been knocked down by a car. Two kilometres later we came to the end of our pilgrimage for the day, after 18 443 steps, 14.42 kilometres, or 3 hours and 36 minutes (Figure 7.26).

⁵⁴ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “We must pray for each other, we must pray for our children and grandchildren and family, I will pray for your family, children, and grandchildren.”

⁵⁵ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “I do not have a man waiting for me, we walk on our own time.”



Figure 7.25: The two elderly women from Rawsonville



Figure 7.26: Another cross of remembrance and number of steps taken and kilometres covered

7.7.2 Reflection: Pilgrimage of faith: Slanghoek to Rawsonville

Every pilgrimage and every walk serve a personal purpose, meaning, and objective devoid of preconceived ideas. The pilgrimage of faith, like the other pilgrimages, was about walking and the experience, and it took place in the Breede Valley area, which provided a wealth of unique qualities and natural beauty (Figure 7.24). Every time I explore a new route, a new pilgrimage, my faith in humankind is restored. This also happened in the case of taking this pilgrimage (Figure 7.25), through which my Creator opened my eyes for things that we as human beings take for granted and things we assume to be a given.

Everything that I am, everything that I have, has been given to me by the Creator. I realised more and more how my Creator saw it fit to favour me to have all the experiences on the different pilgrimages on the Cape Winelands Camino. It was a humbling experience that deepened my realisation that one should respect life (Figure 7.26). Life was nothing more than a journey to venture and explore for what was and was to come. The goal of this pilgrimage was to walk a certain number of kilometres and steps in order to rekindle spiritual well-being. The day's experience and interactions with the locals gave the pilgrimage meaning that was filled with purpose for us as pilgrims.

7.7.3 Journey of hope, sharing and giving: De Doorns – Worcester

The world had gone crazy, and South Africa seemed to be under a spell and in a trance of obsession. When I walked this pilgrimage, I again realised that, if South Africa spent a drop in the bucket addressing pressing issues such as impoverishment, unemployment, and hunger, we would have won a portion of the battle. This journey was even more personal to me than the others were. Let me explain. I was engaged to be married and my bridal party arranged a bridal shower for me. I was blessed and fortunate by the grace of the Almighty with food in my cupboards, a roof over my head, and a job. I saw on a status from one of my contacts that there was a need for ingredients for a soup kitchen in the De Doorns community. Therefore, instead of a personalised gift, I requested that my guests donate ingredients for this soup kitchen. The reasoning behind it was that it would be of greater value to me to feed hungry people than give a personalised gift. I felt that I could always buy a gift for myself, if there was a need for one. With the COVID pandemic and restrictions, working remotely, I came to appreciate the simple things in life. This was also an eye opener for me: that you do not need much to maintain and sustain your well-being. I therefore today dedicated this walk to the hungry souls of De Doorns, situated in the Hex River Valley

That day three of us embarked on the journey, a month after we had walked the pilgrimage of faith. My fellow pilgrims and I made a pit stop at Saint Maria Goretti Parish, a Catholic church, where we delivered the supplies (bread, jam, butter, fresh veggies, and meat). We had a short conversation with the local priest, who informed us that the parish could only feed 150 to 180 people once a week. This was because the donations they received limited them around feeding people. He was telling us that most of the community members were seasonal workers and, because it was winter, they had no jobs and income. As a result, they would offer themselves for any kind of odd job such as cleaning his car or the church in exchange for something to eat.

He thanked me and, as I was walking away, I thought that I would like to do more and help more.



Figure 7.27: Image of the Valley of Worcester

Our journey continued, and we found ourselves amidst the mountains of Worcester. We met a group of people on our journey, also walking, and very friendly. They greeted us: “môre môre, hoe gaan dit?”⁵⁶ “Nee goed dankie en hoe gaan dit met julle?”⁵⁷ I replied. I was thinking by myself that it was only in the rural areas and countryside that one encountered this kind of warmth and friendly greetings from the locals. One of the locals stayed behind, and he asked us about a plant, the “Klipblommetjie”⁵⁸. He asked us whether we knew the story of the “Klipblommetjie”⁵⁹ and our response was “ons is nie van die area nie.”⁶⁰ He explained that this plant grew on rocks and stones in the area. After a while the flower would cover itself with a whitish layer. The flower would then turn itself into another colour, shedding its layer and becoming as smooth as a baby’s bottom (as explained by the local). He explained that you could not imagine that this plant could bloom into a beautiful flower. The evidence of the

⁵⁶ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “morning, morning, how are you?”

⁵⁷ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “No, fine, thank you, how are you doing?”

⁵⁸ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “Stone flower.”

⁵⁹ Translation from Afrikaans to English.

⁶⁰ Translation from Afrikaans to English.

evolution of the “Klipblommetjie⁶¹” (Figure 7.29) was found in so many places on this particular journey.

We exchanged greetings, telling one another to walk safely and to enjoy the walk. For the first time on my pilgrimage, I did not come across any crosses of remembrance, or any statues, and it created a sense of hope within me. We completed the day’s journey: 11 115 steps, 8.45 kilometres, or just under 2 hours. We stopped for a coffee at the Kokerboom restaurant in the Karoo National Botanical Garden in Worcester, which was managed by the South African National Biodiversity Institute. I had some bed socks with me and gave some to the security guards on duty at the gate. They were very helpful and friendly, and I could see that they performed their duties with so much pride, something that I had not experienced so often. We left the mountain terrain in Worcester feeling very hopeful.

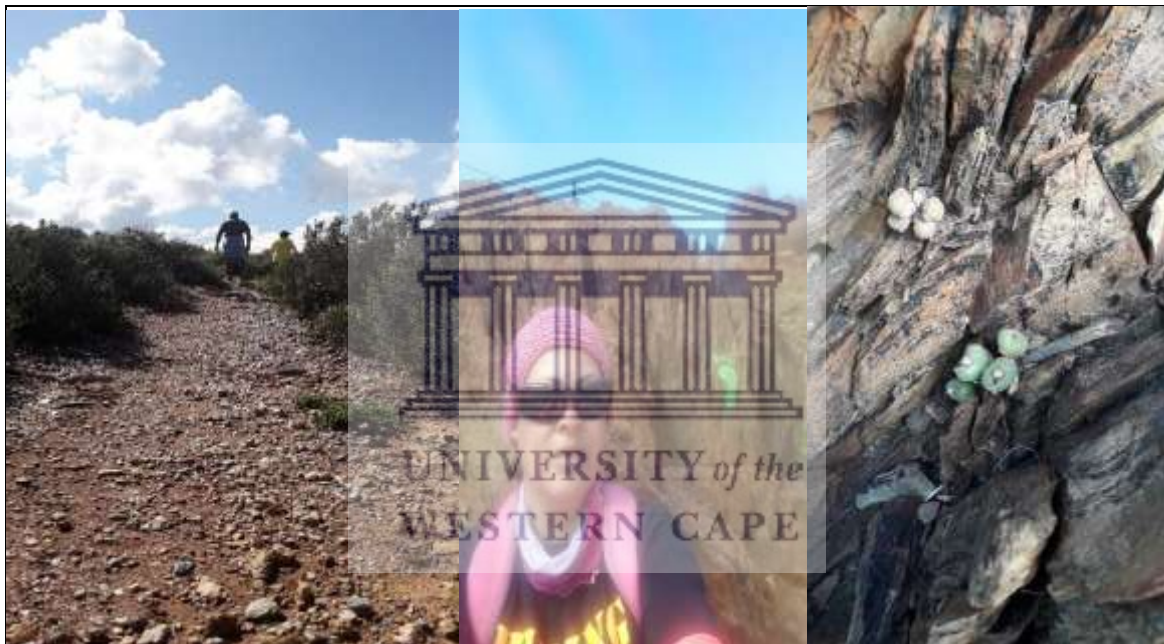


Figure 7.28: Pictures of the footprint and “Klipblommetjie”

7.7.4 Reflection: A journey of hope, sharing, and giving: De Doorns – Worcester

Basic necessities had not vanished; they still existed. Isolation kept us from witnessing and experiencing humanity’s fundamental needs. Sharing and giving not only gave me optimism, but also a sense of purpose. My sense of purpose was intertwined with my sense of healing and cleansing. To be able to feed 150-180 individuals may seem small in comparison to the thousands of people suffering from hunger in our country, but I believed I had made a

⁶¹ Translation from Afrikaans to English.

difference by donating a substantial amount of ingredients to a soup kitchen. The pilgrimage for the day not only served a purpose because of that donation, but also created meaning for the community of De Doorns. We felt good, because we could feed the hungry, despite the fact that it saddened me that I was unable to do more. Maybe one day, my STEDRA-WITBREL pilgrimage would create more opportunities and possibilities for assisting these people. This would allow me to accomplish more by feeding more, contributing more, sharing more, and creating a sense of hope to the broader society. For this journey, we had accomplished what we had set out to achieve, completing the number of kilometres and steps and donating ingredients to a soup kitchen. As with the other pilgrimages, this pilgrimage was unique in terms of its natural and cultural environments. The particular “blommetjie,” for example, could only be found in this part of the Breede Valley district. In a sense, the “blommetjie” presented uniqueness and new life with hope.

7.8 Pilgrimage: Langeberg area

The newly formed municipality of Langeberg encompasses a huge territory with widely disparate characteristics. The former municipalities of Ashton, Bonnievale, McGregor, Montagu, and Robertson (Figure 7.29) have combined to become the Langeberg Municipality.

The municipality of Langeberg is located in the Western Province’s Cape Winelands District and covers an area of 4 518 km². Montagu is located between the Keisie and Kingna Rivers and was originally known as “Agter Cogman’s Kloof.” The only way out to the west was through that kloof, which required large teams of horses or oxen. In the 1850s, John Montagu, the British Secretary of the Cape Colony stationed in Cape Town, saw the Cape Colony’s promise but recognized that it could never grow without good transportation and communication. Montagu was subsequently assisted to pave routes over the mountain barriers by pioneering road engineers. Through his initiatives, the country’s agricultural development progressed, and he became a well-known personality. In his honour, the town was renamed Montagu in 1851, and he visited it. It is unknown when the springs were discovered, although early explorers followed the flow of rivers and camped near present-day Montagu. They sipped the clear, curiously flavoured water, finding it incredibly refreshing, and followed its path through the gorge to the hot springs. The news of the healing waters quickly spread, and many visitors began to flock to the area. The springs are a component of the now-popular Montagu Baths (Langeberg Municipality, 2021).



Figure 7.29: Location of Langeberg district (Source: Cape Winelands District Municipality, n.d.)

7.8.1 Journey of the springs: Avalon Springs – Montagu – Doringlaagte – Talana

The journey of the springs was walked by a fellow pilgrim and I, a week after the pilgrimage of hope, sharing, and giving. The path meandered and bent into a westerly direction and we found ourselves on the R318. It was a beautiful sunny day. Characteristic of a small town on a Sunday, all shops were still closed, and you could feel the town of Montagu surrounded by mountains and immersed in a melody of calmness and serenity. We came across our first remembrance monument, the “Voortrekker Monument,” dated 1838 to 1938, and dedicated to the “Voortrekker Eeufees”⁶² on 16 December 1938. We turned into Long Street on the R62 in the direction of Barrydale. We found ourselves walking in a westerly direction towards Barrydale, crossing the Kingnariver. The bridge over the Kingnariver was built in 1963. We passed Le Domaine Farm in a south-westerly direction and found our way off the R62 into a westerly direction into van Riebeeck Street. No hustle and bustle of cars: it was so quiet, and one could let your thoughts go in any direction. We passed the Ouberg, Touwsriver, and Ladismith exit and continued with our journey to Talana. On this stretch of the journey, which formed part of the route to Barrydale, we met “Camino.”

⁶² Translation from Afrikaans to English: “Voortrekker Centenary.”

We came across the first person on our path who greeted us but seemed to walk with a purpose. We greeted back, saying “môre, more,”⁶³ and continued our journey. The landscape was breathtaking, and for a minute or two we were talking in disbelief about how friendly people were in this part of the province. My fellow pilgrim and I walked in silence with our own thoughts. A cyclist passed us by and greeted “môre, môre”;⁶⁴ within a few minutes he was nowhere to be seen. “I am sure these guys must be very fit,” my partner for the day announced. The second cyclist appeared, and I asked him: “Hoe ver is Talana?”⁶⁵ “Nee, dit is ‘n hele ent se stap nog,”⁶⁶ he said. My response was: “Is jy op pad Talana toe?”⁶⁷ “Nee,”⁶⁸ he said, “ek is op pad Doringlaagte toe,”⁶⁹ and was out of sight in seconds.

The memorable event of the day involved “Camino,” the dog that crossed our path. She was behind a locked gate and it was almost as if she was timing us. When we walked past on the opposite side of the gate, we whistled and greeted her. The next minute she found her way through a gap between the ground and the gate to greet us. Most dogs would find their way back to their gated environment after a minute or two, but not “Camino.” “Is that her name,” my walking buddy for the day asked. “No” I said, “she reminds me of a Camino (journey/path).” I called her “Camino” and it was as if she could relate to the name that I gave her (Figure 7.31).

“Camino” decided to walk with us and, after 500 metres, we decided to turn back and try to get her to somehow find her way back to the farm. We were looking for a number to call and get the owners to take “Camino” from our hands. Without any success, we continued our journey, and “Camino” walked with us as if she was sent to be our guardian angel. We found a sign with a security company’s number on it and called to ask what we should do with “Camino.” We gave them our location and continued our journey. They arrived within ten minutes and tried to get “Camino” into the bakkie but without any luck. We tried to explain which farm she was from, where she started walking with us, and that our friends would collect us at our end

⁶³ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “Morning, morning.”

⁶⁴ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “Morning, morning.”

⁶⁵ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “How far away is Talana?”

⁶⁶ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “No, it’s still a long way off.”

⁶⁷ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “Are you on your way to Talana?”

⁶⁸ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “No.”

⁶⁹ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “I am on my way to Doringlaagte.”

destination. Thus our question was what we should do with “Camino.” The driver told us that we should get to the next farm and leave “Camino” there. They would try to communicate this on their WhatsApp group and the owner should be able to collect her. He took my number and left. We continued walking, but there was no sign of an owner or the security person. We walked to one of the houses on the farm and explained our situation. A few minutes later, our transport arrived, and I explained what had happened.



Figure 7.30: Picture of “Camino”

The friend who picked us up from our end destination for the day suggested that my fellow pilgrim should stay with “Camino.” Our friend and I tried to find the farm and the owner of “Camino.” We drove back to the Ouberg, Touwsriver, and Ladismith exit, stopped at the first house and explained our situation and asked whether they knew whom “Camino” belonged to, but again without success. We drove further and came across a couple of farmhouses. I knocked on the door and I could see that the farmer was very hesitant to speak to me. I explained my situation, that I did not know what to do with “Camino,” and that I could not just leave her. He directed me to another house, saying that CB, the owner of “Camino,” was the only one

“Camino” would listen to and that they were out of town. The farmer told us that “Camino” did this quite often. I asked for the owner’s mobile number, called him, and explained that we were from outside the town on a walking journey. The owner asked us to leave her on Redhill farm, the one closest to Barrydale, where we had ended our journey for the day. We left “Camino” on Redhill and continued the next leg of our journey.

As we continued our journey towards Barrydale, my fellow pilgrim and I stopped at a farmstall to take a break. Whenever I walk and meet other walkers or nature lovers, there is an instant connection between us. At the farmstall we met a hiking couple. We started talking and this connection was there immediately. We spoke about this, that, and the other. The woman of the hiking couple took pictures of the mountains and trees and I was part of her picture story for the day. I commented about her taking pictures. She was amused and responded that she watched me and that she could see I enjoyed taking pictures of the landscape and not of people. She introduced herself as Xeba and amusingly commented that this was not her real name. We started talking about the beauty of nature. I was telling her that the Langeberg area and its impressive mountains were among my favourite landscapes and that I was on a mission. Her partner responded with a sense of pride of what she was able to and had accomplished. “She can walk, this woman and for her age she can show the youngsters a thing or two.”

There is a distinct way in which walkers and hikers interact, and in the way in which we speak with one another, involving a form of respect and humbleness. We agreed that walking and hiking were simplicity without any pretence or falsehood and that you needed the bare minimum to enjoy simple things in life. “I am not a good walker like her,” said the male partner. “But I am an engineer by trade and have a thing for dams.” We then shared with them our experience with the dog “Camino.” This led the man to comment that “the story of Camino is not anything spiritual but we as human beings have some aura that we carry with us and a dog can sense that. ‘Camino’ felt your positive aura.” We continued to converse with them for a while and exchanged our stories as if we had known them for our whole lives, until we agreed that we needed to take off because of other engagements. Two total strangers had connected with us. They even took pictures with us. The four of us parted, saying, “we will see and meet each other again.” No numbers were exchanged: only names were, but I knew that somehow our paths would cross again. We reached our destination for the day after 17 971 steps, 13.92 kilometres, or 3 hours (Figure 7.31).

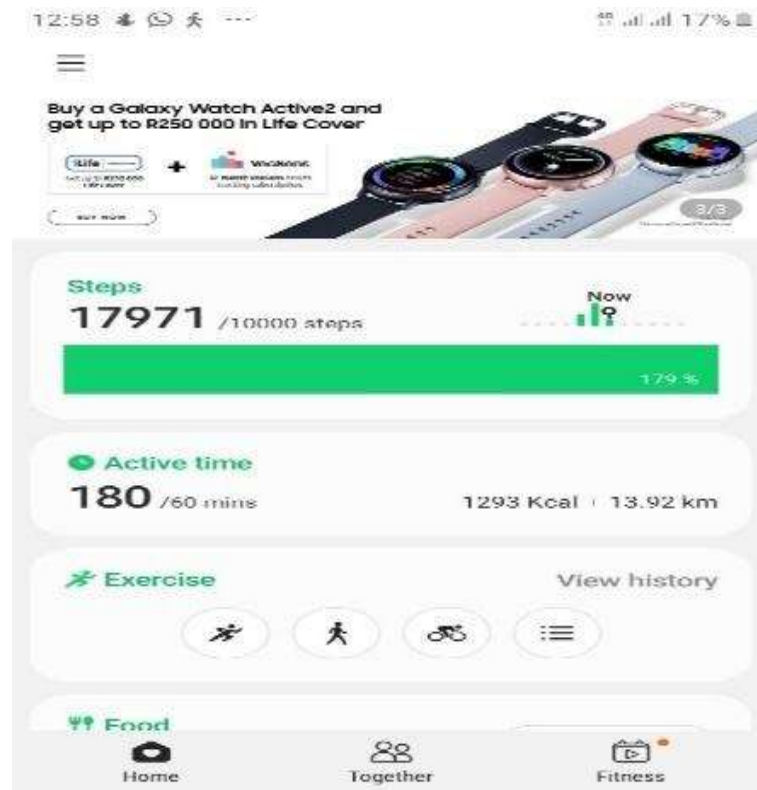


Figure 7.31: Image of the number of steps taken and kilometres covered

7.8.2 Reflection: Journey of the springs: Avalon Springs – Montagu – Doringlaagte – Talana

Every journey you undertake, no matter how many times you have walked the same path, carries a new experience. I believe that the landscape, weather, surroundings, and even the people you walk with all contribute to an exceptional experience. The purpose of a journey might be the same as the ones before, but the meaning of the journey will be unique. The autoethnographer’s reflections on the Avalon Springs – Montagu – Doringlaagte – Talana route may be different from the other routes, but there was a shared experience and a kind of synergy with everything when you felt the warmth of the sun on your face and the occasional car passing you by. This path had provided a variety of distractions and improved your mood in a unique way. Our guardian dog, “Camino,” as well as the breeze played a tune to complement our being and presence. For the time being, nothing else existed; the only important things were you and the immediate context within which you find yourself. The accomplishment for the journey was more than the number of kilometres and steps walked. What counted most were the experience, one’s inner thoughts, and one’s inner self.

7.8.3 Pilgrimage of the redheads: Ashton to Robertson

My pilgrimage then took me from Robertson to Ashton, a day after the journey of the springs. It was windy and cold. That day it was only the two of us: a fellow pilgrim and me. After walking for two kilometres, the cold wind became too much to bear, and we turned back in search of a shop. We found Robertson Square, a mall located on the boundary of the town, popped into a PEP-store, got what we needed, and continued to pursue our journey. “This is much better and warmer,” my fellow pilgrim commented. “Yes,” I concurred, and added that once we were on the move we would feel warmer. Our journey was taking us in a north-easterly direction. We came across our first cross of remembrance and I was thinking to myself that this person had died at the same age as that of my eldest daughter, who was still alive (Figure 7.32). My fellow pilgrim and I tried to figure out what could have happened to him. Since a piece of car wreck was attached to the cross, we agreed that it must have been a car accident. I took a picture of the cross and we continued our journey on the R60.



Figure 7.32: Pictures of Robertson Square and a cross of remembrance

We walked past Klipbos farm and crossed a river with an unknown name. We were not sure whether it was a man-made river or not. Interesting, though, was the signage’s on Route 60: “Vir Jesus is niks ontmoontlik nie”⁷⁰ and “South Africa, turn back to the Almighty.” Redhead birds on the fence then caught my eye. It was spectacular to witness the way in which they moved, as if they were orchestrated to comply with some rhythm and sequence but also as if

⁷⁰ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “For Jesus nothing is impossible.”

they were abiding to the rules of the wind blowing over the area (Figure 7.33). The path was taking us in a south-easterly direction past Klipboschlaagte, Klipboslaagte dam, and Lucernepack. We walked adjacent to farm fencing and most of the terrain had warning signs claiming private property. I was thinking of how nice it would have been to walk through the farm areas in the way that I had experienced on my Camino in Spain. Farmers welcomed pilgrims and not a single farm I had walked through had private property signs nailed to the ground.



Figure 7.33: Pictures of the redheadbirds and the signages

Walking today's pilgrimage was so peaceful, with little distraction. The biggest distraction was the wind howling through the Fynbos, which was almost unsettling. We were greeted by a spider cocoon that reminded me of the cocoon that we came across on the Klapmuts–Boschendal journey. It was equally spectacular, and the only difference was that, whereas the

latter had been created against a fence, as if the fence was the foundation for the cocoon, the local Fynbos was the foundation for the cocoon on our present journey (Figure 7.34).



Figure 7.34: Picture of the spider cocoon

I got very close to the web and found it fascinating. Even though the wind was blowing, the cocoon and the web did not move once. Our journey continued and we came across a farmstall.

The “Agteriedam” farmstall’s signage was on the wall of the dam. At first, I was wondering what this meant. Was it the name of a farmstall? As we walked a bit closer to see what the mystery was all about, we discovered that 100 metres from the signage behind the dam one actually found the “Agteriedam” farmstall. The name means “Behind-the-dam” farmstall. On the wall of the dam a few metres away from the “Agteriedam” farmstall signage I saw two crosses of remembrance, which reminded me of the crosses on Calvary (Figure 7.35).



Figure 7.35: Images of the “Agterriedam” farmstead and crosses of remembrance

On our redheaded path of discovery we came across towers built with stones. My fellow pilgrim commented that it was not just a tower that was impressive, but also the way in which the stones were balanced on top of each other. There seemed to me to be a significance around how it was balanced while including different stone sizes. Some were small, some were bigger, some were curvy, some were flat, and some had a robust look, but all of them served a purpose in this pile of stones (Figure 7.36).

It looked like a shrine built in an altar-like shape although, to me, it rather seemed like a shrine of hope and possibilities. We debated about its significance and what it could possibly represent for another few minutes, and continued our journey to Ashton.



Figure 7.36: Images of the Shrine of Hope and Possibilities and the “bridge”

Our next stop was at Platform 62, a tourism conference centre, where we looked for something to drink. One thing I had noticed about the countryside was that people were very friendly and liked to engage in conversation, as mentioned. This town’s people were no different. We were standing outside the tourism conference centre looking at the big black steam train that had been turned into an artefact to attract the attention of tourists. There was a local standing close to the train, immersed in deep thought. I asked him how long it would take before they would finish the road, as the roadworks in Ashton seemed to have been ongoing for a very long time. His response was: “Hulle moet dié jaar klaar maak want hulle is al besig vir meer as vyf jaar. Julle sal nie glo nie, die brug wat soveel geld gekos het, is op verkeerde plek gebou. Hulle het so lank gevat om die brug klaar te bou en nou moet dit geskuif word, want dit is op verkeerde plek gebou.”⁷¹ This led me to ask whether the people responsible were not supposed to have done planning before they built the road and the bridge (Figure 7.36), whereupon the man commented somewhat sarcastically: “Hulle sal mos seker net ‘n remote gebruik om die brug te skuif.”⁷² He was actually laughing while commenting about the bridge and shook his head in

⁷¹ Translation from Afrikaans to English: “They have to finish this year because they have been busy for over five years. You will not believe that the bridge that cost this amount of money was built in the wrong place. They took so long to finish building the bridge and now it has to be moved because it was built in the wrong place.”

⁷² Translation from Afrikaans to English: “They will probably just use a remote to move the bridge.”

astonishment while alluding to the concomitant waste of money. We greeted him, thanked him for his time and conversation, and told him that we were on a journey and needed to continue our walk. We continued for another few kilometres towards the border of Ashton, where we reached our destination for that day after 18 839 steps, 14.59 kilometres (Figure 7.37), or 3 hours and 7 minutes.

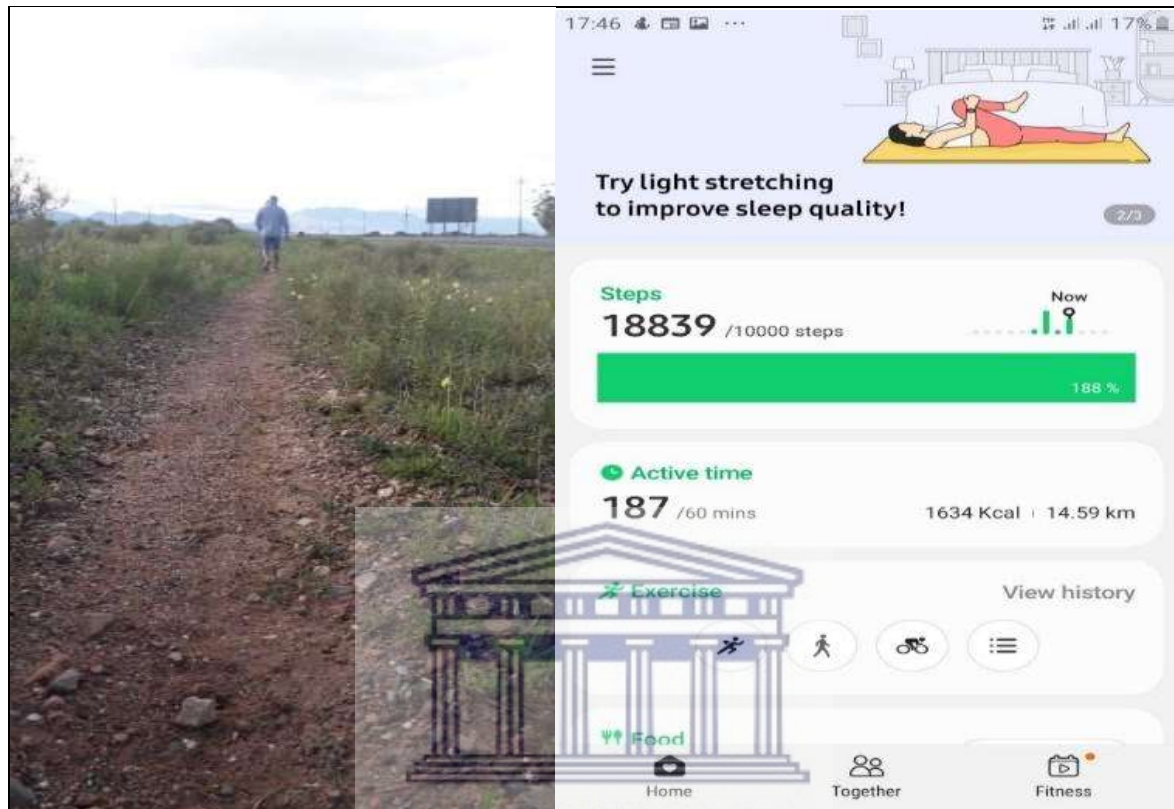


Figure 7.37: Images of the boundaries of Ashton and number of steps taken and kilometres covered

7.8.4 Reflection: Pilgrimage of the redheads: Ashton to Robertson

If you are not interested in mountains or the outdoors, you may come to believe that all mountain terrains are the same. When I post a couple of pictures on my WhatsApp status, I am frequently asked why I walk and hike in the same terrain or on the same mountain. I mentioned earlier that you can walk the same terrain so many times and have a different experience each time. Despite the fact that the goal was the same, the outcome was not. My contacts perceived my pilgrimage from Robertson to Ashton to be the same mountain or terrain. Mountains have such a distinct typology. You can even walk the same mountain range multiple times and have a new experience each time. Mountain ranges are so perfect that the eye is unable to capture every contour, gorge, and curve. One can only see as far as one's eyes can see. Nature's

typology has the feeling of infinite difference and detail, and that is the perfection of our Creator.

Once I was told that a flock of birds signified positivity, whether this be a myth or not. The redhead birds were everywhere on the route we walked, as if they were signalling in their abundant numbers the arrival of prosperity. This signalling of prosperity was a humbling experience that had a positive impact on our spirituality. It also contained a message of achievement and abundance in one's life. A pilgrimage and perceiving the outdoors are similar to observing the overflowing details of life, and that can become your fulfilment.

7.9 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to write the narrative of walking the STEDRA-WITBREL pilgrimage, my Camino with fellow pilgrims. The STEDRA-WITBREL pilgrimage was explored over five municipal districts in the Cape Winelands district region. It was undertaken on foot, and it became more than an act on foot. It was a path and journey of discovery. Two routes, each walked in the manner of a personalised COVID trail/ route, were explored in each district. A conventional pilgrimage was walked on days subsequent to one another, which meant that, compared to a conventional pilgrimage, it would have taken me ten days to complete the overall route. Due to COVID, the conventional option for this pilgrimage was unfortunately taboo. I had to improvise and walk whenever it was possible for me to do so because of factors outside of my control. The STEDRA-WITBREL pilgrimage was walked over a period of five to seven months, which was part of that which made the personalised route during COVID so unique.

Each journey and pilgrimage that the pilgrims and I explored was distinct and memorable. Each was unique, and the pilgrims found a common interest through understanding the reason behind the personalised pilgrimage. At times pilgrims struggled to complete the set route and destination for the specific day. With the motivation and encouragement of fellow pilgrims they managed to complete the set route for that day. Each pilgrimage route played an important role in the pilgrims' spiritual well-being because each journey served a purpose. Some days were more challenging than others because most of the routes we walked were underdeveloped and had no visible footpaths.

This chapter highlighted not just the pilgrims' impressions and observations, but also the pilgrims' interactions with the locals we encountered along the way.

Chapter 8

Pilgrimage walking and spiritual well-being: Findings, conclusions, and recommendations

8.1 Introduction

Walking, pilgrimage walking, and spiritual well-being have different effects on different people. Walking, pilgrimage walking, and spirituality have all been found to be beneficial to the physical, mental, and psychological well-being of the body.

After a brief introductory statement presenting the contents of the present chapter, a summary of the main findings, as based on the empirical and qualitative investigation of participants' perspectives while walking a personalised COVID trail in Cape Town, will be given. Findings relating to existing literature will embody a third section of the present chapter: it includes participants' perceptions of walking, pilgrimage walking, spiritual well-being, and QoL, which show striking similarities and variations. There is a strong link between that which has been discovered in the literature and the ways in which the participants saw walking. Participants' opinions of walking as a physical or recreational activity in connection to a personalised COVID route are discussed in the reflection on limitations and challenges section.

The focus was on walkers/ pilgrims who took part in a WhatsApp steps challenge and walking a pilgrimage route. The subsequent section of the chapter will discuss the significance of the study and recommendations for future work, which centre on the use of WhatsApp as medium and the way in which the steps challenge was conducted. It explains that further developmental opportunities and popularisation of the study can be explored, and the chapter is then drawn to a conclusion.

The aim of my study was to explore pilgrimage walking as an intervention for spiritual well-being with specific focus on a personalised COVID pilgrimage trail in Cape Town and its surrounding areas. The three objectives engendered by this aim were as follows:

- To explore the impact of pilgrimage walking on spiritual well-being;
- To investigate participants' perceptions of pilgrimage walking;
- To explore how pilgrimage walking contributed or improved QoL around participants' walking personalised COVID trail (see 1.4 in Chapter 1).

8.2 Summary of findings

The project was an empirical and qualitative study centred on the perceptions of participants walking a personalised COVID trail in Cape Town and surrounding areas. Based on my empirical research, I formulated key findings. These are presented in this chapter in summary of my analysis of chapters' five to seven. Participants' impressions and interpretations of a personalised COVID trail in Cape Town and the surrounding areas were used to identify these key findings. It was found that they enjoyed both physical and spiritual benefits from walking.

On foot and well-being

The act of walking was seen by participants as a source of well-being in a number of ways, including seeing walking as “a happy place.” They found satisfaction in walking while on a journey to discover new things. Walking was not only interpreted as the steps to a physical location but was experienced as peace of mind to bring about wellness. Some of the participants found walking to be enjoyable because of its simplicity. Individuals were pleased and happy as they walked across open spaces and “joyful” and “enjoyable” are words that came to mind when participants thought of a “happy” place. Participants demonstrated that they thought of walking as intensely related to a “happy” place: “I also walk when I need wide open spaces where I can shout out my happiness, skip and jump for joy, sharing me with nature without fear of judgement or condemnation for behaviour that may be deemed crazy. I can lose my burdens and reconnect to what is most precious: a peaceful life filled with joy and gratitude” (FP8, FP11 and FP13).

Walking is a journey of exploration that meets a specific need. Participants saw walking as a process aimed at improving their health. When confronted with difficulties, participants regarded walking to be a helpful intervention. Despite the fact that the COVID pandemic had a negative impact on everyone, walking had a good impact on participants' well-being. Their mental and physical well-being was enhanced by the act of walking.

They were able to be more active and live a better life by walking, which was beneficial for their physical and mental health. They gained a better understanding of why harmony was important, making them feel more at peace. Participants explained experiencing harmony as follows: “I just wish I could have done it consistently every day. But I will keep on walking no matter what” and “Especially when I go with you guys to the beach and that, for me it is very encouraging and I feel good doing that” (FP3, FP26 and FP50). Despite the fact they were

unable to walk every day, they were inspired by the fact that they were part of a group that met regularly.

Frame of mind and well-being

Walking brought joy to the soul, spirit, and body. Participants said that walking relieved tensions and pressures brought on by the pandemic and their professions. Walking in nature evoked feelings of happiness.

Walking had a positive impact on the soul and spirituality, especially during the height of the COVID pandemic, according to participants. Participants said that walking gave them a feeling of being themselves. Their responses revealed a clear link between physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Walking expanded the boundaries and constraints of everyday life, allowing for opportunity to develop the spirit. Participants believed that having a healthy mind resulted in having a healthy body. They only perceived a movement toward greater positive thinking after their mindset had been transformed. In the beginning of the steps challenge, participants found it challenging but, as it became a more frequent venture, they felt more comfortable. They could make better decisions in the attempt to achieve their walking goals and objectives when it was important to do so. Here, too, participants gained a better understanding of why harmony was important, making them feel more at peace. Harmony was not only a feeling or a peaceful walk but also encompassed consistency, well-being, and happiness.

Participants experienced a unique connection with their Creator as they walked. Despite COVID restrictions, they could experience conversations with their Creator, which enhanced their spiritual well-being. Spiritual walking is a one-of-a-kind activity that cultivates spiritual attributes and resembles a type of resistance to life's hectic pace.

Stepping it up

According to my findings, pilgrimage, walking, and pilgrimage walking can all be done in either a traditional or a non-traditional manner. The outcome of my study supports the argument that walking and pilgrimage walking could be instrumental in achieving well-being in different ways. Walking and pilgrimage walking can indeed occur in many ways. The steps challenge was an initiative that gained in popularity after the initial lockdown in 2020. It was experienced differently and uniquely by each participant. Participants claimed that the benefit of walking and its effect on the mind and body became a part of the process. The effect of walking on the

mind and body was a part of the process of determining the number of steps. They all agreed that walking and stepping up were two different ways of identifying their capacity to walk their steps.

Individuals' steps included features like effort, routine, monitoring, attempting, and movement. Participants discovered that appreciation from other participants in the groups proved motivational and assisted in continuing the steps journey. When participants put greater effort into completing their steps, they were astounded by their abilities. The number of steps walked made them feel capable and compelled them to do more. Every step was recorded and acknowledged by the group members. Whatever measure was necessary for achieving the required steps was explored. Participants agreed that moving to meet the required steps was part of the process of achieving them.

In this context, walking is associated with the influence on the mind and body. Walking improved participants' perceptions of simplicity. Participants agreed that walking gave them a sense of "freedom." When they walked for so many kilometres, they saw the benefits of it. The distance they walked was good for their health.

The number of steps taken became an important factor in presenting their achievements in the WhatsApp group. Finding a safe place to walk and to record walking steps was challenging. Using a Smartphone in a public space was not always easy because of the safety factor: there would be those who would want to steal the phone and hurt one in the process. Recording steps formed part of the unit of measurement for progress, which presented the participant's achievements. Participants agreed that moving, walking, and carrying out one's required steps were not time bound and formed part of their daily routine. Being part of the walking community made the loneliness bearable. Walking became an essential activity in dealing with isolation during the initial lockdown in March 2020 and the COVID pandemic in general. Steps dedication became a movement on the social and cultural levels, a movement to share, a movement to express feelings, a movement of empathy.

WhatsApp group: Technology support forum on the go

The WhatsApp group that was part of the steps challenge initiative became a support platform for the participants. As a result of the guidance and support they received from the WhatsApp group during the pandemic lockdown, participants were encouraged to extend their walking boundaries. They found the group interaction enjoyable because of the encouragement it gave.

Despite the lack of interpersonal interaction, they experienced increased well-being while walking as a WhatsApp group.

Experiencing a sense of belonging that affected their lives positively During COVID became crucial for the majority of participants. When they interacted with the group, they felt that they were not alone. The WhatsApp group allowed them to be part of something. It was impossible for participants to participate in normal activities in the face of the original COVID restrictions.

Personalised journey

The goal of each participant's personalised journey was to improve his or her health and mental well-being. A personalised journey enabled participants to discover open spaces while continuing their spiritual journey. Because of COVID and the restrictions of March 2020, participants were only allowed to walk indoors. There was clear evidence that walking, whether indoors or outdoors, improved participants' health.

A footstep is associated with hiking, according to some of the participants. Participants detected a direct correlation between their footsteps and the type of relationship experienced by certain family members. Participants agreed that the sound of a footstep presented the feeling of freedom, tranquillity, and seclusion. Walking one-step at a time implied freedom, tranquillity, and silence. Participants stated that demographics did not matter when the person experienced the sound of a footstep. The experience was centred on the journey. However, the sensation of liberation that came from the sound of a footstep was not confined to a particular age, status, position, education, or background.

Confinement counselling

Participants averred that interaction with other participants was helpful when it came to addressing their isolation and loneliness. Intervention therapy through the act of walking was engendered by their enthusiasm and commitment. They could identify with one another in the group. On the WhatsApp platform, participants accepted that they were not alone thanks to the walking initiative. According to some participants, being part of an organisational initiative was important because it provided consistency and encouragement. This consistency and encouragement transformed some of the group members' way of thinking. The goal of walking with the group was to do better. Belonging to a group made sense for participants, as it addressed the isolation induced by the pandemic.

My STEDRA-WITBREL pilgrimage

My STEDRA-WITBREL pilgrimage was a journey of discovery. In each district, two routes were explored, each in the form of a personalised COVID trail/ route. A traditional pilgrimage was prohibited as a result of COVID. Because of factors beyond my control, I had to improvise and walk whenever possible.

Driving a route is completely different from walking it. Walking it was a unique physical and emotional experience. The Klapmuts to Werda path was a completely new route for me as a hiker, which brought the excitement of discovering something new. The journey from Klapmuts to Werda became part of a pilgrimage. While walking, one's attention was given to the purpose of the journey. Every path my fellow pilgrims and I took, took us on a different journey. It elevated the journey's significance and purpose beyond that of a simple walk. The journey from the Salvation Army to Boschendal via Klapmuts and Simondium was breathtaking. How could one describe to the reader the idyllic scenery surrounded by mountains? It is difficult to comprehend and illustrate the Creator's perfection unless one is present in that environment. The interaction between people passing by, as well as the sharing of a spiritual connection amongst the fellow pilgrims, all contributed to a sense of positivity. Locals shared a sense of humility that could only be felt by nature lovers. Positive emotions were generated by the various on-route encounters. The connection with everything on the journey, and the relationship between yourself and your Creator, made up for the unpleasant sensation of body aches.

Sharing becomes an important aspect of walking or pilgrimaging. The largest part of a pilgrimage involves walking in silence, occupying only you and our thoughts. A smile, a nod of acknowledgement, or an elbow gesture is more valuable than any form of verbal communication during this. Pilgrimage benefits not only one's health and QoL, but also one's spiritual well-being. These various values and considerations were confirmed by the STEDRA-WITBEL experience.

The "poles of remembrance" on the walks symbolised sympathy and empathy. The Pilgrimage of Remembrance was marked by grief and rage, but it was also a walk filled with sincerity and hope. The walk's goal was to remember the youth who had died in the year 2020.

The personalised path of this pilgrimage elicited a wide range of emotions and feelings. The surroundings provided a sense of calmness and peace, which gave the journey meaning. The

pilgrimage's goal was to find the "Place of Prayer", which enhanced the walk's significance. The "Place of Prayer" was discovered along the way.

Since COVID and the 2020 lockdown affected everyone in South Africa, we found these to be part of our journey despite our agreement not to engage in political debates. As part of this pilgrimage, one could not help but to join in the conversation, because people and interaction are crucial aspects of who we are and what we do. One of the reasons for this pilgrimage was to bring healing to some of the pilgrims.

The Tulbagh to Wolseley pilgrimage was undertaken in memory of those who had died as a result of COVID. Despite the fact that everyone was filled with rage, sadness, and pain at the start, participants were able to share their feelings with one another and move on. For that brief moment, time stood still and nothing else mattered because, in their world, walking is the only thing that is important. Walking replaces anger and pain. The conversation became the most important thing for them. It allowed the individual to grieve and recover from a difficult time in their lives.

During my journey, I discovered a significant disparity among those from the suburbs/ city and those from the countryside/ rural areas. Local people and different spiritual ideals and beliefs. The distribution of bed socks brought a smile to the faces of those who received them. People walking from Prince Alfred Hamlet to Ceres paused for brief conversations, as if time had stopped for them.

That day's walk embraced a conversation about faith, and that our faith should be greater than our fears. It was therefore called the pilgrimage of faith by the author afterwards. It was created because of what was found on the route: "The Heavenly Father heals," "Patience," "Humility," "Kindness," Faithfulness." The pilgrimage of faith, like the other pilgrimages, centred on walking and experiencing new things. This pilgrimage took place in the Breede Valley region, which offered a wealth of distinct qualities and natural beauty. My faith in humanity was restored each time I embarked on a new journey, a new pilgrimage. For the community of De Doorns, the pilgrimage served a purpose. "Blommetjie," a flower, which is found in the Breede Valley area, symbolised uniqueness and new life with hope.

The purpose of a journey may be the same, but the meaning of a journey is distinct. The journey from Avalon Springs delivered the same expectations. The journey of Avalon Springs-Montague-Dringlagte-Talana offered a variety of diversions and enhanced one's spirit in a

unique way. The breeze sang a song, and our guardian dog, “Camino,” enhanced one’s well-being. The landscape, weather, surroundings, and even the people you walked with contributed to an amazing journey. My journey from Robertson to Ashton was perceived to be by some to be the same mountain or terrain walked before. However, you can walk the same path over and over again and have a new experience each time. Whether it is a myth or not, the birds we discovered on our journey were linked to positivity. The positivity of experiencing the birds on our journey was humbling and had a positive impact on our spirituality. It also conveyed a message of success and abundance in one’s life. A pilgrimage and experiencing the outdoors are similar to observing various aspects of life that can lead to fulfilment.

8.3 Findings in the light of the literature research

The literature explored alluded to walking as more than the act on foot (Gros, 2014). My research confirmed this. In fact, there are distinct similarities between existing literature and what my research discovered. One or two new characteristics surfaced as interpreted and perceived by participants that could be added to extant discourse on the topic of pilgrimage and walking. There was also a clear correlation between what was found in the literature and how participants perceived the act of walking. In our case, the act of walking was viewed through the lens of a personalised COVID trail. It was further clear that there were similarities and differences between extant literatures on the one hand and participants’ perceptions of walking, pilgrimage walking, spiritual well-being, and QoL on the other.

Walking and mental well-being

Walking is recognised to be an effective technique for boosting mental wellness. The United Kingdom’s pedestrian policy describes it as beneficial to both the body and the mind (cf. Davies, 1999:7, Chapter 2, 2.4 and 2.5). Several mental health benefits of walking were reported by participants. The mental health benefits included walking as a coping mechanism and reduced stress levels (see Chapter 5, 5.8 and 5.15). Walking became a mental health booster, a stimulant and restored participants’ balance and well-being (see Chapter 6, 6.2 and 6.7). They viewed walking as a beneficial activity that improved one’s well-being. It calmed the walker and helped his or her general health. Walking helped them to remember things with greater clarity and to relax. Walking improved participants’ mental health during the COVID pandemic and was experienced to be an overall mood booster providing mental stimulation and a positive outlook on life.

Walking was chosen by participants as an activity that reduced distress and provided emotional healing, making them feel accomplished. Walking was linked to emotional confidence, increasing the latter and making people feel better about themselves. Walking is a mind-clearing and mind-transforming activity. Walking was frequently described as a way to clear one's mind. The mind was stimulated and, as a result, the mind was still. Participants felt mentally well after taking a walk (see Chapter 5: 5.5 and 5.11).

Walking and physical well-being

There are clear similarities between the extant literature and the research conducted here on walking and physical well-being. The relationship between the two variables appeared to be complementary. In Chapter 2 (2.2.4, 2.34 and 2.5) and Chapter 5 (5.5 and 5.11) evidence was given of such similarities and the complements that exist between walking and physical well-being. As a result of the influence of walking on the body, a few attributes were determined. Walking restored the body, participants could achieve required physical body weight and in the opinions of the participants healthy bodies produced healthy minds. The act of walking was seen to be the overall physical attribute when it came to the participants' well-being. They believed that walking helped them lose weight, heal their bodies, and keep them physically active. Walking had a positive impact on their bodies and was beneficial to their skin. It provided protection against illness, particularly COVID and, when combined with a balanced diet, boosted their immune system (see Chapter 5: 5.8). Some of the participants walked in front of the mirror to keep themselves safe and mentally fit during the initial lockdown of 2020.

Walking gave participants a sense of well-being and improved their general health. It had such a great effect that it helped the participants sleep better. Walking brought participants to a happy place that was not only limited to a destination or physical location, but also included a mental space.

Walking and spiritual well-being

Participants observed walking through the lens of spirituality. Spirituality is a path toward wholeness (cf. Tisdell, 2003; Lucas, 2008 in Chapter 3:3.2.1). Participants experienced the effect of walking on their spirituality to be rejuvenating. Their walking journey became one that involved a specific outlook on life while pursuing a spiritual journey. The spiritual journey allowed the participants to find silence within themselves, invoking introspection. They associated the silence and introspection with the act of walking. Participants added to the

features they would attribute to walking a comfortable way of moving forward. They felt at ease and at peace, and their lives became calm because of walking.

Walking became a metaphor for the soothing of participants' souls. They experienced walking as an activity that uplift their spirit and created tranquillity around them and for them. The tranquil experience resulted from conversations with their Creator. The association with their Creator was that they were never alone on their journey. Knowing that they were not alone made them feel blessed and protected from the harshness of the pandemic.

Walking: Who am I?

Each walkers' identity as a person was defined by their ability to walk (see Chapter 2). Participants saw walking as an intervention tool for facing life. It gave them new perspectives on life while they did some introspection. They confirmed that walking made them accountable for their actions and participation. They found their role and position in this world because of the act of walking. It allowed them to face life while they were taking an inventory of their position in life. Their outlook on life improved because of walking. It was associated further with the interaction within the group and because this, their relationships with family members improved. Their sense of belonging was established and new friendships were formed. Their interaction motivated them to experience meaningful conversation with fellow walkers in the group.

Participants explained that they enjoyed enhanced motivation because of their personal achievement and accomplishments. The latter were due to the sacrifices they made around walking the required number of 10 000 steps daily over a period of 21 days. Participants agreed that their commitment and dedication allowed them to manage their time better in view of the steps challenge. Achieving their steps and being applauded in the WhatsApp group for doing well gave them a sense of appreciation. They were inspired, felt appreciated, and became focused because of their achievements. This changed and improved their QoL.

Stepping up: Personal journey

The steps challenge involved a personalised journey as experienced by the participants of my study. The personalised walk was engendered by conditions beyond our control. COVID and the initial lockdown of 2020 steered the study into finding alternative ways to sustain overall well-being. In the context of my study, walking centres on movement while taking long walks and listening to one's footsteps (cf. Watson, 2006). Walking is seen as a personal activity (cf.

Bassett, 2004), a journey for meeting personal needs (cf. Frey, 1998), and one that leads to personal flourishing (Kun *et al.*, 2017). Stepping up was indeed a personal journey and participants expressed this personal aspect in different ways.

There was the potential capacity to move forward in a series of steps. The series of steps was conducted in a structured way, whereby participants had to walk a certain number of steps per day. They found a need to improve their well-being and undertook their respective personal journeys to improve this. Walking influenced their personal development and the concomitant wish to improve health and wellness. Personal development meant to stay healthy and fit. Their interests and needs influenced their habit of walking, and this had been developed over time. It was as if participants' minds were programmed to tell their bodies they needed to walk. In order to overcome obstacles, personal interaction was useful. Interpersonal engagement increased participants' overall well-being.

Personalised walks in nature offered liberating influences on participants' humanness. Personal beliefs such as their faith allowed them to experience a personal journey in order to develop their spiritual well-being. The personalised journey allowed participants to find open spaces while experiencing a spiritual journey.

The desire to excel changed participants' QoL. They were encouraged to keep going and improve on achieving their number of walking steps as the challenge progressed. Participants confirmed that they could achieve their personal objectives on a daily basis. Smartphones were used to track their steps, the latter as units of measurement, in order to meet their personal goals. Personal achievements were characterised by stepping up. Which became an intervention in personal accomplishment. The measuring of steps and kilometres walked became personal achievements and accomplishments.

Participants created their own journey. The journey became more than just a walk; it became part of their discovery of life. Walking in nature helped participants to achieve goals and experience a unique journey. During COVID and the lockdown, an opportunity was created for participants to explore different journeys: one for resting, one for reflecting, and one for unwinding. Participants agreed that spiritual restoration was a component of the journey when it came to rebuilding the inner self. A sense of belonging forced them to develop their own personalised journey. Walking is about putting one foot in front of the other, one-step at a time. The process of walking is the story of the walker's journey. A footstep tells the story of the

individual and tells the story of the journey of the footstep. Footsteps took participants on different mental and physical journeys within the steps challenge. The acknowledgement within the steps challenge group motivated participants. Acknowledgement pushed the participants to continue the steps challenge.

Pilgrimage walking: My STEDRA-WITBREL journey

The STEDRA-WITBREL journey was a pilgrimage mapped out as a personalised COVID trail. So, did this pilgrimage meet the requirements of a traditional pilgrimage, the latter as reflected in extant literature Walking is a meaningful method when it comes to completing a pilgrimage. The length of the pilgrimage is also instrumental (see Chapter 2:2.6) and the end destination is important (see Chapter 2:2.3). Maddrell (2013) finds the definition of a pilgrimage to be an activity on foot outdoors, whereas Cohen (1979) sees pilgrimage as the experiencing of a unique route. The act of pilgrimage is centred on penance and endurance (cf. Roos, 2016) and it is an opportunity for the person to reflect (cf. Oldstone-Moore, 2009). However, a few scholars view pilgrimage as a perception (Bhardwaj, 1973; Stoddard, 1980; Jackson and Henrie, 1983). Pilgrimage was interpreted in the conventional sense by various scholars. My STEDRA-WITBREL journey clearly satisfied all of the features and requirements set forth by the aforementioned scholars. My research revealed that pilgrimage can be initiated from any place, at any time, and at any point, thus the scholars who referred to pilgrimage as a perception stood out for me. Participants /pilgrims' experiences were personal and subjective. The idea of a perceptual pilgrimage can be used to develop any type of pilgrimage path that meets the requirements of my personalised COVID trail.

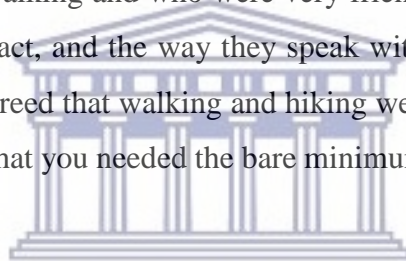
Pilgrimage on foot

My pilgrimage was undertaken on foot and this meets one of the criteria of a conventional pilgrimage (see Chapters 2 and 3). It is taking a long walk. A pilgrimage in general has a meaning, a purpose, and an accomplishment. The pilgrimage on foot experienced by the participants did have a purpose, meaning, and objective. Walking the number of steps and kilometres served the purpose of aiming at a certain distance for their pilgrimage. The people we came across on our journey walked because it was their means of transport. They walked slowly, one-step at a time, one foot in front of the other, as defined in the literature (see Gros, 2014; Kagge, 2019), and they were complacent and happy without any haste to get to their final destination. For the participants undertaking the STEDRA-WITBREL pilgrimage, it was a way to show solidarity with pain experienced by family, friends, colleagues, and loved ones during

COVID. The pilgrimage of remembrance was one such solidarity pilgrimages where participants walked to celebrate the lost lives of young people during 2020. Walking in remembrance demonstrated sympathy and empathy with society.

The pilgrimage of faith was another purposeful walk that was experienced by participants, where they walked in faith. They experienced spirituality while walking. Participants could pray and connect with their Creator. Pilgrimage walking creates a peaceful space, a space to reflect, and a time to embrace solitude. Participants agreed that pilgrimage was a movement of walking that created solitude. Movement expressed gratitude, admiration, and joy. Pilgrimage was about emotions and feelings and the mental and psychological process of walking on the participant's well-being (see Chapter 3:3.3). The processes of healing, cleansing, and grieving influenced the participants while walking. They confirmed that pilgrimage walking had healing powers because it allowed them to mourn and recover from a mental dark place.

There is an instant bond between pilgrims, hikers, and nature lovers. We met a group of people on our journey who was also walking and who were very friendly. There is a distinct way in which walkers and hikers interact, and the way they speak with one another, with a form of respect and humbleness. We agreed that walking and hiking were forms of simplicity without any pretence or falsehood and that you needed the bare minimum to enjoy the simple things in life.



Distance walked during the pilgrimage

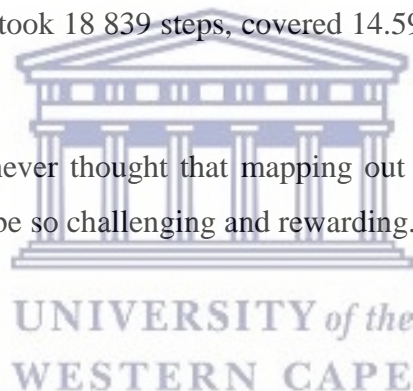
One of the attributes of a conventional pilgrimage is the distance walked (Staddord, 1997, Chapter 2). This section confirms meeting the requirement of distances walked of the STEDRA-WITBREL pilgrimage. The Pilgrimage of Cleansing was walked in 3 hours and 11 minutes, 20 866 steps, or 15.9 kilometres. The Pilgrimage of Healing was walked in different segments. The first leg walked from the Salvation Army on to Klapmuts comprising eight kilometres, while the second leg, from Klapmuts to Simondium, was achieved in nine kilometres. The last leg, from Simondium to Boschendal, was walked in 32 211 steps, 25.46 kilometres, or 5 hours and 38 minutes. The pilgrimage of remembrance was walked from Boschendal to Franschoek and the participants and I completed this pilgrimage in 23 965 steps, 19.01 kilometres, or 4 hours and 18 minutes.

On Youth Day, June 16, 2020, a pilgrimage of 24 693 steps, 19.25 kilometres, or 4 hours and 8 minutes, my fellow pilgrims and I walked it in commemoration of young people who had

died. After 29 910 steps, 23.33 kilometres, or 4 hours and 7 minutes, the Pilgrimage of Prayer in Paarl was completed. The Pilgrimage for “You,” from Tulbagh to Wolseley, was completed in 21 709 steps, 17.01 kilometres, or 3 hours and 53 minutes. The participants and I completed our pilgrimage in remembrance of James, William, Joachim, Auntie Mienie, and Kevin. The Pilgrimage of the Bed Socks took us on a journey from Prince Alfred Hamlet to Ceres, which we completed in 16 632 steps, 13.1 kilometres, or 2 hours and 3 minutes.

I referred to the pilgrimage from Slanghoek to Rawsonville in the Breede River Valley as the Pilgrimage of Faith. It was completed in 18 443 steps, 14.42 kilometres, or 3 hours and 36 minutes. The next pilgrimage also took place in the Breede River valley, which I named the Pilgrimage of Hope, Sharing, and Giving. This journey was completed in 11 115 steps, 8.45 kilometres, or just under two hours. The route from Avalon Springs was walked in the Langeberg area and the journey was completed in 17 971 steps, 13.92 kilometres, or three hours. The last route, for my STEDRA-WITBREL pilgrimage, was also walked in the Langeberg area and I referred to it as the Pilgrimage of the Redheads. It comprised walking from Robertson to Ashton and took 18 839 steps, covered 14.59 kilometres, and took 3 hours and 7 minutes to complete.

This was a new route, and I never thought that mapping out a familiar terrain but also an unfamiliar walking path could be so challenging and rewarding. It was undoubtedly worth the journey.



Pilgrims' experience

The pilgrim's experience and perception while walking is another characteristic of pilgrimage walking (see Messenger, 2017, and Chapter 2). The STEDRA-WITBREL pilgrimage consisted of a new and unexplored route. Even though the path was unknown to them, those who participated experienced the beauty of nature as a blessing. Walking this route led to a total different experience from driving the route. Walking the route was a unique experience for body and mind. Cars driving by caused momentarily distraction from this experience. Once the body and mind adapted to the surroundings, the cars passing by blended in with the experience of the pilgrimage.

Pilgrims experienced physical, mental, and spiritual benefits as a result of their walking, which dovetails with the traditional features of a pilgrimage. Physical, mental, and spiritual benefits

reinforced the overall well-being of the pilgrims. Discovering my Camino on South African soil increased my sense of fulfilment, joy, contentment, and accomplishment.

Pilgrims shared experiences with their fellow walkers. Interaction with the locals that one came across created a sense of contentment. It was as if one had met those locals in another lifetime and known them all your life. Pilgrims walked in a peaceful mindset and experienced a commonality of mutual respect. There was a general sense of humbleness, thankfulness, and of being blessed because of the experience.

Somehow, pilgrims felt favoured by their Creator so as to experience the different pilgrimages on the Cape Winelands. The experience was humbling and deepened by the realisation that one should respect life. Every pilgrimage was an experience filled with the interaction of locals of the area, which gave pilgrims meaning, and purpose. Our aura, whether positive or negative, was sensed by humans and non-humans. A case in point is the story of “Camino,” the dog we met on one of our pilgrimages, which was indeed a beautiful experience.

Every journey carries a new experience. People you walk with and those who cross your path contribute to that unique experience. Most importantly, it is the experience of one’s inner thoughts, introspection, and the discovery of one’s inner self that makes the pilgrimage exceptional. The discovery of the redheaded birds, which represent prosperity, we found to be humbling. It had a positive impact on our spirituality.

Pilgrims’ endurance while walking

Another attribute of a pilgrimage is associated with the endurance element (see Roos, 2017, Chapter 2). Endurance is linked to the amount of physical, mental, and spiritual pain the body and mind are able to absorb and handle while walking. The endurance level is also perceived to be the purpose and meaning of the pilgrimage. Part of walking a pilgrimage is dealing with physical and mental pain. Pilgrims experienced body aches while walking. However, conversation and praying allowed them to forget about their sore legs and feet. One of the pilgrims felt that the pilgrimage group should not only celebrate people passing on but should celebrate life too. In that moment of agreement, pain and sadness vanished from our minds.

Pain nonetheless caused havoc when it came to dealing with the long distances walked. The long journey aggravated some of the pilgrims’ legs and feet. While walking, some would

frequently ask about the distance they still had to walk, because it had become so taxing on their bodies.

Pilgrims walked in solidarity with those who were suffering from COVID-related emotional distress. They walked in support of the families that endured emotional pain because of the death of their loved ones during COVID. The aim of certain pilgrimages in the Cape Winelands was for them to feel emotionally connected to the pain experienced by relatives, co-workers, and friends. The pilgrimage's goal was to let go of the past, move forward, and rediscover emotional well-being. Most of the time, they managed to share their anger, sadness, and pain with fellow pilgrims. Walking while sharing these feelings and emotions had some healing powers.

8.4 Reflection on limitations and challenges

I should stress that my study was primarily concerned with participants' perceptions of walking as a physical or recreational activity relating to a personalised COVID trail. The focus of this research included the ethnographer's experience of a personalised walk. The findings of my study are confined to participatory observation. My research as such focused on walkers/pilgrims participating in a steps challenge that was posted on a WhatsApp group platform, as indicated. The participants were only recruited via a social media platform, which included WhatsApp and the occasional word of mouth. I have only addressed the influence of walking by exploring the nexus between pilgrimage, walking, and pilgrimage walking, establishing a footprint of spirituality on well-being and QoL. The steps challenge was explored through participatory observation, determining personalised steps and kilometres. The steps challenge also engendered an important part of mapping out a STEDRA-WITBREL journey, which involved, as indicated, an autoethnographic perspective.

Completing the STEDRA-WITBREL route took longer than anticipated. It involved an unexplored walking terrain and mapping out the route had to be done carefully, because the route could have been dangerous. This meant that I had to wait on other walkers' /pilgrims' availability to walk with me. The walk took me from town to town and village to village. Due to the time constraints of fellow walkers' /pilgrims, I had to comply with their time schedules and transport availability. COVID, with its restrictions and lockdowns, hampered the consistency of walking the STEDRA-WITBREL route.

The existing infrastructure for such a Camino within the Winelands municipal district cannot

be compared with the Spanish Camino's well-developed infrastructure, but there were good possibilities for this. The route could mostly only be walked over weekends, and whenever my personal funds allowed me to do so (I covered the expenses for the duration of the research).

One of the resources needed to engage in my pilgrimage was good footwear. After each pilgrimage, I realised how taxing it was on my feet. My footwear became worn out after some time and no longer served the purpose of walking for so many kilometres and so many steps at a time. I had to buy new shoes to continue my journey and must cover some distance for the new shoes not to hurt your feet any longer. I treated my feet with salts and ointments after walking. Some days I would strap up my feet with plaster to complete my journey. Another tool for conducting my research was a camera and a Fitbit (smart watch) to track my steps and kilometres and, given my limited resources, I utilised my mobile phone for this purpose.

Due to COVID restrictions and the lockdown, most of my data was collected by means of digital media, which included WhatsApp, instant messaging, Telegram, emails, Google Meet, and Zoom. The rest of the data were collected through the traditional medium of voice recordings.

Each time the president of the country, Cyril Ramaphosa, would address the nation and announce restrictions, my planned walks were affected. It would be either the weather or the restrictions that hampered data collection. As an autoethnographer and participant, I was compelled to take notes while participating as a walker and a pilgrim. I needed to walk to write the narrative. Notes were handwritten (see Appendix 9) and recorded on the WhatsApp group (see Appendix 10). The pilgrimage walk and steps challenge was based on personal experiences that included my own as a participant-observer. With the pandemic in full swing, I also had to take precautionary measures to conduct the research. On one of the journeys, I also stepped on a broken beer bottle. A piece of the glass stuck through the sole of my shoe, and I was fortunate that it only scratched my skin, not leaving any permanent damage. Some care was nevertheless needed before I could continue my journey.

8.5 Statement on ultimate significance and recommendations

I firmly believe that the use of WhatsApp as a medium and way to organise a steps challenge as conducted in my study is potentially an instrumental avenue for further research and investigation. The utilisation of WhatsApp for recruiting walkers should be further developed and popularised. A larger support and administration system for participants should be built,

particularly to cater for and accommodate people who live alone.

Despite the limitations brought about by the COVID pandemic, the results of my research demonstrate that people who live alone are psychologically and physically affected by isolation to a greater extent. The steps challenge on the WhatsApp provided participants with a sense of purpose. They had a strong sense of belonging. The challenge should include an incentive or reward scheme to encourage poor performers to participate.

This study has significance for the fields of social development, religion and development, pastoral care and spirituality (see 1.5 in Chapter 1). It is from the vantage point of this interdisciplinary framework that future research on pilgrimage walking in the Cape Winelands and surrounding areas should be developed and explored. Walking from town to town and community to community could be expanded and could contribute to further knowledge production within the ambit of autoethnographic case study work. More narratives could be written and more stories told. Autoethnographic study has the potential to significantly enlighten and contribute to community development. In the context of South Africa, narratives about walkers and pilgrims are scarce. My research could provide a platform or voice for expanding on these storytelling journeys and disseminating facts or knowledge to the general public. If this area of knowledge generation in South Africa is not further explored, it will remain stagnant. In the field of good health and well-being, knowledge production could be increased or even challenged. My research attempted to meet the third sustainable development goal (SDG) of “ensuring healthy lifestyles and promoting well-being for all at all ages.” The SDGs were developed by the United Nations in 2015. Furthermore, based on my findings, there is a lot of room for me to expand my research in this SDG. Walking is clearly beneficial to a person’s emotional and physical well-being, as evidenced by my research.

8.6 Conclusion

The 21 days steps challenge was a personalised walking experience, the first of its kind in Cape Town and its surrounding areas. In fact, it was one of a kind within the South African context. Globally a few scholars (Kramer *et al.*, 2020; McCarthy, Potts and Fisher, 2021 and Berger *et al.*, 2021) have written about monitoring steps but not in the same context as the investigation that I conducted. Within the South African context, only Gradidge and Kruger (2020) have conducted research about monitoring of steps, but it was limited to 14 days within an isolated or quarantine environment (see Chapter 6: 6.13).

The combination of indoor and outdoor walking in the case of my own research allowed participants to achieve their goals. Walking literally became more than the act of a foot. It was spontaneous: it was a journey of discovery, cost free, and effortless. You could literally walk everywhere and anywhere, which meant that this type of programme (a 21 days challenge) was an initiative that could be kick-started at any time anywhere. The evidence of my research shows that there is a need for such a venture. Participants living on their own found this connection very appealing as to addressing their mental and physical well-being.

Pilgrimage walking is not a new venture in the global community and is increasingly becoming a trend in the South African context as well. The STEDRA-WITBREL was a personalised pilgrimage, as indicated, and the first pilgrimage mapped out within the Cape Winelands district. My findings call for further investigation into expanding this route. The few Caminos in South Africa – Cape Camino, Pilgrimage of Good Hope, Baviaans Camino, and Tankwa Camino – are rather expensive and therefore exclusive. What I attempted to achieve through the STEDRA-WITBREL pilgrimage was to pave the way so as to make it accessible for any person wanting to walk a pilgrimage with a view to soothing their soul.

The goal of this research was to explore whether a personalised COVID trail could be created and, if so, whether a personalised pilgrimage could affect and improve the individual's well-being. However, as this study has demonstrated, the results were significantly more subtle and complex than these two fairly straightforward goals would suggest. What is evident, though, is that there is a need for personalised pilgrimages. The development of such pilgrimages should be a continuous process aimed at improving individual well-being and QoL. Exploring different personalised routes will expand the possibilities for such ventures. Furthermore, achieving spiritual well-being and QoL are of considerable importance for human flourishing and walking, particularly pilgrimage walking, is a significant undertaking towards that end.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Recruitment of participants



Appendix 2: Interview schedule

*Confidentiality: names have been replaced with P1, P2....

*INTERVIEWEE	PLACE	TOOL	DATE
P1	Bellville	Email	March 2020
P2	Bellville	Email	March 2020
P3	Strandfontein	Email	March 2020
P4	Table View	Face-to-face	July 2020
P5	Kraaifontein	Face-to-face	July 2020
P6	Kuilsriver	Email	July 2020
P7	Table View	WhatsApp	July 2020
P8	Soneike	Email	July 2020
P9	Mitchell's Plain	WhatsApp	July 2020
P10	Kraaifontein	Email	August 2020
P11	Bellville	Face-to-Face	August 2020
P12	Eersteriver	WhatsApp	August 2020
P13	Gordonsbay	Email	July 2020
P14	Table View	Email	August 2020
P15	Mitchell's Plain	WhatsApp	July 2020
P16	Heideveld	WhatsApp	July 2020
P17	Mitchell's Plain	WhatsApp	August 2020
P18	Somerset West	WhatsApp	August 2020
P19	Kraaifontein	Telegram	July 2020
P20	Phillipi	WhatsApp	August 2020
P21	Vanguard Estate	Email	August 2020
P22	Cape Town	Email	March 2021
P23	Fourways	Email	March 2021
P24	Pearless Park	Email	March 2021
P25	Mitchell's Plain	Google-Meet	March 2021
P26	Hanover Park	Whatsapp Call/Recording	March 2021
P27	Protea Heights	Google Meet	March 2021
P28	Zevenwacht	Email	March 2021
P29	Kuilsriver	Email	March 2021
P30	Kuilsriver	Email	March 2021
P31	Eersteriver	Face-to-face	March 2021
P32	Kraaifontein	Face-to-face	March 2021
P33	Cape Town	WhatsApp/voicenote	March 2021
P34	Rusthof	WhatsApp/voicenote	April 2021
P35	Rusthof	WhatsApp	January 2021
P36	Rusthof	WhatsApp	January 2021
P37	Pniel	WhatsApp	September 2020
P38	Goodwood	WhatsApp	September 2020
P39	Kuilsriver	WhatsApp/voicenote	April 2021
P40	Pniel	WhatsApp	April 2021
P41	Rocklands	WhatsApp	April 2021
P42	Joostenbergvlakte	WhatsApp	April 2021
P43	Stellenbosch	WhatsApp	April 2021
P44	Yzerfontein	WhatsApp	April 2021

P45	Ridgeworth	WhatsApp	April 2021
P46	Pniel	WhatsApp	April 2021
P47	Zinnia	WhatsApp	April 2021
P48	Fourways	WhatsApp	April 2021
P49	Northpine	WhatsApp	April 2021
P50	Stellenbosch	Email	April 2021
P51	Stellenbosch	WhatsApp	April 2021
P52	Stellenbosch	WhatsApp	April 2021



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Appendix 3: Interview guide

Introduction

Thank you for participating in this interview. I am interested in the perceptions amongst participants walking a “personalised” COVID trail and how “pilgrimage walking contributes to their “quality of life.”

Demographic information

Please indicate:

O Female

O Male

Which category below includes your age?

- 30 - 39
- 40 - 49
- 50 - 59
- >60

Interview questions

1. How does pilgrimage walking contribute to the quality of your daily life?
2. How do you experience walking during COVID?
3. Does pilgrimage walking contribute to your spiritual well-being?
4. Does pilgrimage impact/develop/enhance your religion?
5. Why have you decided to participate in this personalised COVID route?
6. How do you interact or relate with other pilgrims, walkers or nature lovers on a pilgrimage journey?
7. How did you get to know about this COVID pilgrimage trail?

Conclusion

I think I have asked all the questions I could think of. Do you have anything to add that you feel we have not covered perhaps? Then I just want to thank you so much for talking to me. If you think of anything else or you have any questions, you are welcome to contact my supervisor.

Appendix 4: Consent Form



Pilgrimage walking and spiritual well-being: A case study of personalized COVID trail in Cape Town and surrounding areas

Researcher:

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and have understood the information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.
(If I wish to withdraw I may contact the lead researcher at any time)
3. I understand my responses and personal data will be kept strictly confidential. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the reports or publications that result for the research.
4. I agree to have the interview or group discussion audio-recorded.
5. I agree that the data collected from me may be used in future research.
6. I agree to take part in the above research project.

_____ Name of Participant (or legal representative)	_____ Date	_____ Signature
_____ Name of person taking consent (If different from lead researcher)	_____ Date	_____ Signature
_____ Lead Researcher (To be signed and dated in presence of the participant)	_____ Date	_____ Signature

Copies: All participants will receive a copy of the signed and dated version of the consent form and information sheet for themselves. A copy of this will be filed and kept in a secure location for research purposes only.

Researcher:
Janine Pekeur

Supervisors:
Prof. Ignatius Swart
Prof. John Klaasen

HOD:
Prof. John Klaasen



Appendix 5: Information sheets



PROJECT TITLE: Pilgrimage walking and spiritual well-being: A case study of a personalised COVID trail in Cape Town and surrounding areas

INVITATION

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by **Janine Pekeur student number 2266604** for a PhD-thesis at the Department of Religion and Development, at the University of the Western Cape, supervised by Prof Ignatius Swart and Prof John Klaasen.

It is important for you to understand the purpose of the research. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. If you are unclear of anything, I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The significance of the research compliments the existing literature on pilgrimage. It will add scholarly information to pilgrimage walking and the effects on a person's quality of life. My research will be a method of inspiration to the general population, walkers, hikers and nature lovers. This problem is mainly of scientific and intellectual interest and revolves around a practical concern. Despite global coverage and plethora writing about pilgrimage, research on pilgrimage walking within the South African context is scanty. Much has been written about urban and rural walking as well as pilgrimage. Pilgrimage within the South African context refers to moving from one point with transport to a sacred site and not walking a pilgrimage. Pilgrimage walking entails to walking from one town to the next or from one village to the next for hours to reach the end destination of a sacred site. The study will attempt to explore perceptions amongst participants walking a "personalised" COVID pilgrimage. It will also include the effect of "pilgrimage walking" on their "quality of life".

TIME COMMITMENT

The research is participation-observation and observation will be conducted on the trail. Conversation will take place either after daily walks or after the completion of the pilgrimage.

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS

Participation in this research is voluntary, which means that participants have the right to withdraw at any stage. The participant has the right to privacy (including the right to refuse to participate in research). The participant may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. The participant has the right to anonymity and confidentiality. The participant has the right to full disclosure about the research (informed consent). The participant has the right not to be harmed in any manner (physically, psychologically or emotionally).

Information gathered will be used confidentially and anonymously. Information gathered will not be used to harm advantage and disadvantage this study. Participation will be voluntarily, free and there will be no form of payment. Pursuit of truth will be respected. Sensitivity to differences relating to culture, disability, race, sex, religion and sexual orientation will be respected.

RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks for you in this study.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

There are no costs to the participant for partaking in the study.

INFORMED CONSENT

Your signed consent to participate in this research study is required before I proceed with the interview. I have included the consent form with this information sheet so that you will be able to review the consent.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Should you have further questions or wish to know more, I can be contacted as follows:

Student Name: Janine Pekeur
Student Number: 2266604
Mobile Number: 0810195983
Email: jpekeur@uwc.ac.za / 2266604@myuwc.ac.za

I am accountable to my supervisors: Prof. Ignatius Swart & Prof. John Klaasen,
Department of Religion and Theology, UWC.



Telephone : +27 21 959 2206
Email : iswart@uwc.ac.za
Email : jklaasen@uwc.ac.za

Student: Janine Pekeur Studentnumber: 2266604 Signature: _____

Supervisor: Prof. Ignatius Swart Signature: _____

Co-supervisor: Prof. John Klaasen Signature: _____

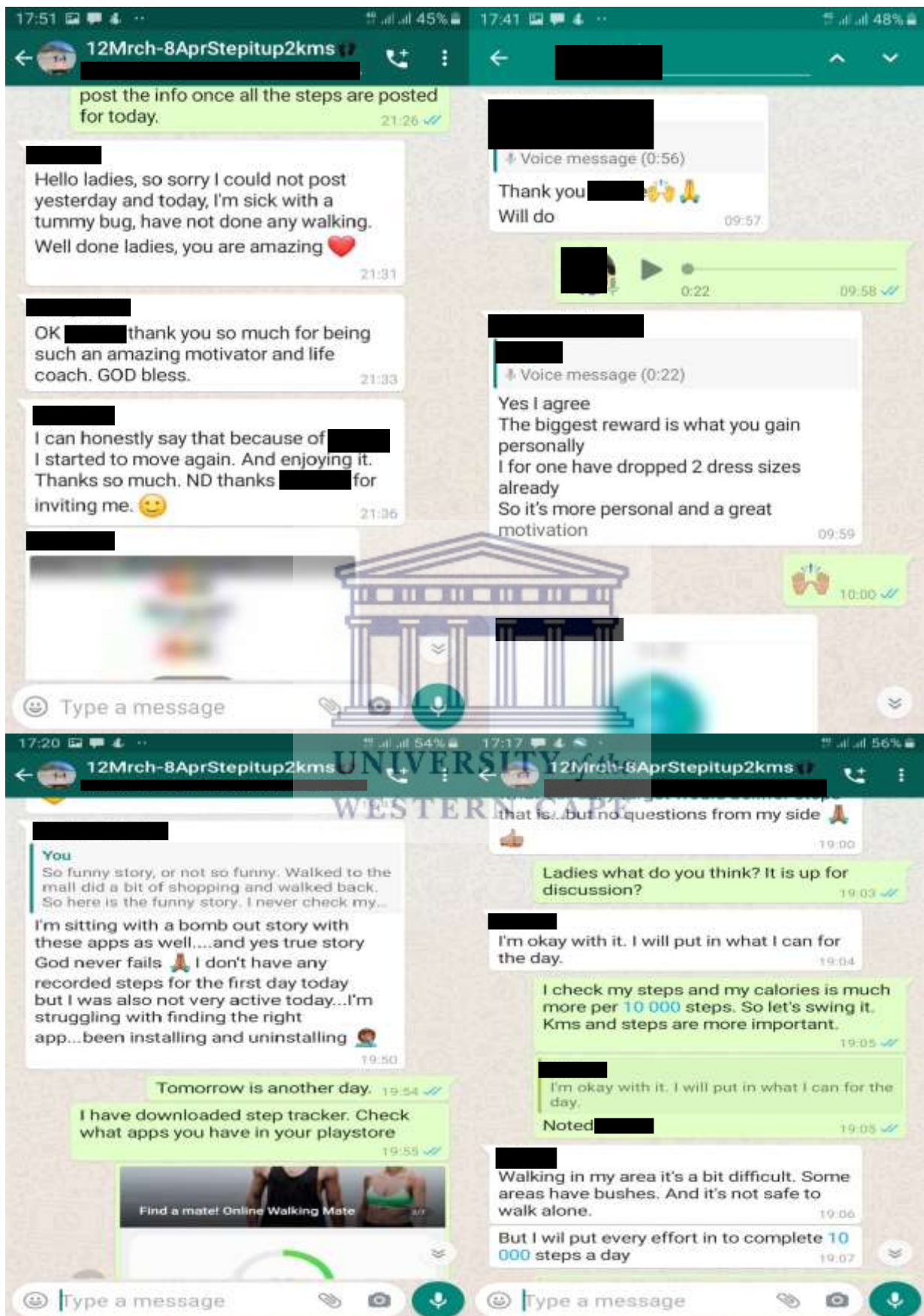
If you have questions about your rights in this research, or you have any other questions, concerns, suggestions, or complaints that you do not feel can be addressed by the researcher, please contact the UWC Human and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee at: 0219592948/49/88 or 021 9592709 or email research-ethics@uwc.ac.za.

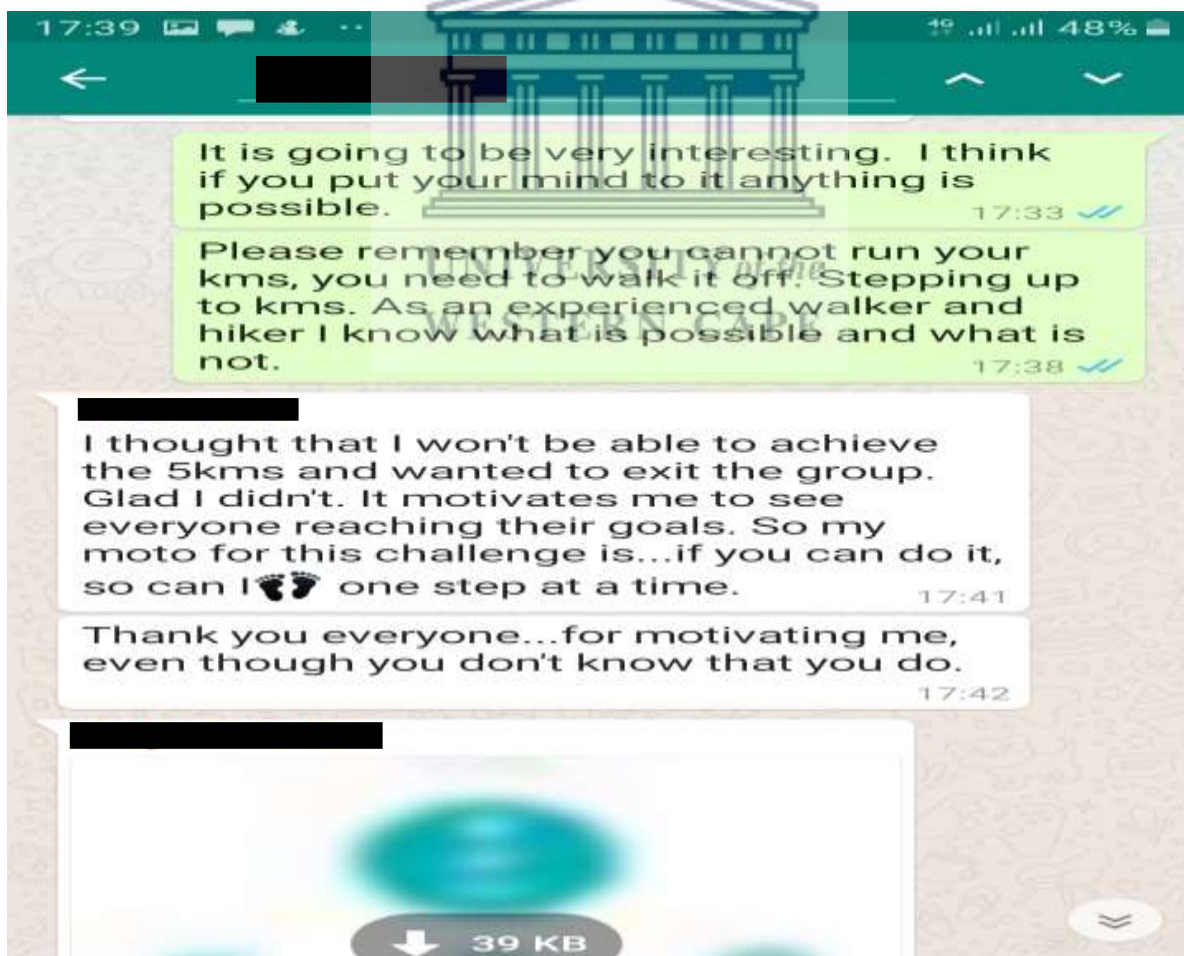


Appendix 6: Virtual observation notes

12 March – 8 April 2021

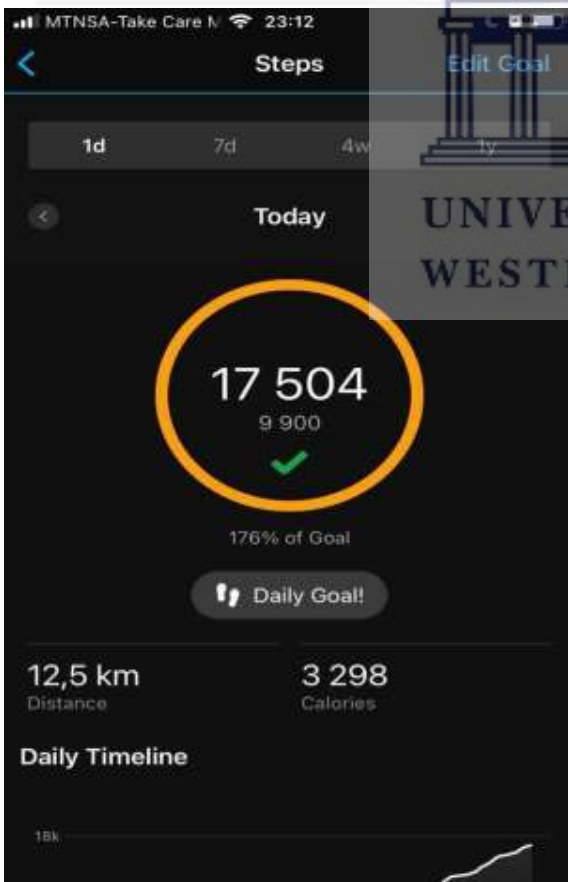
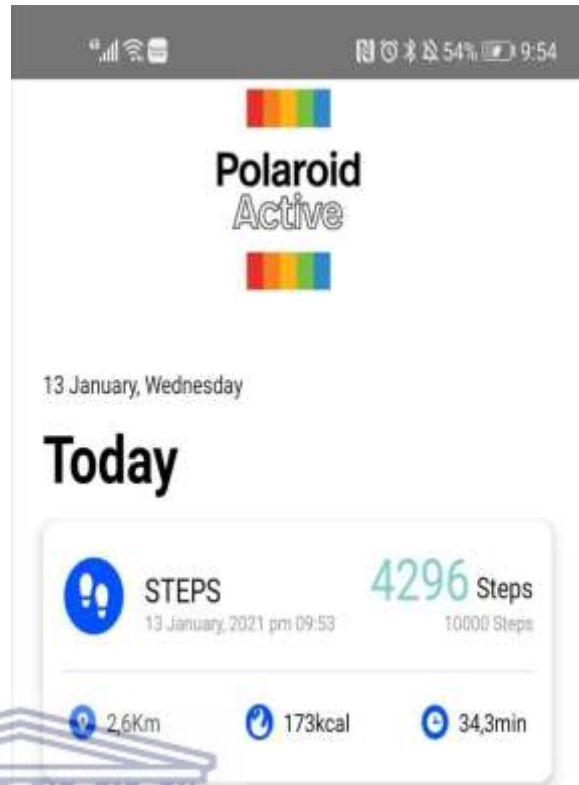




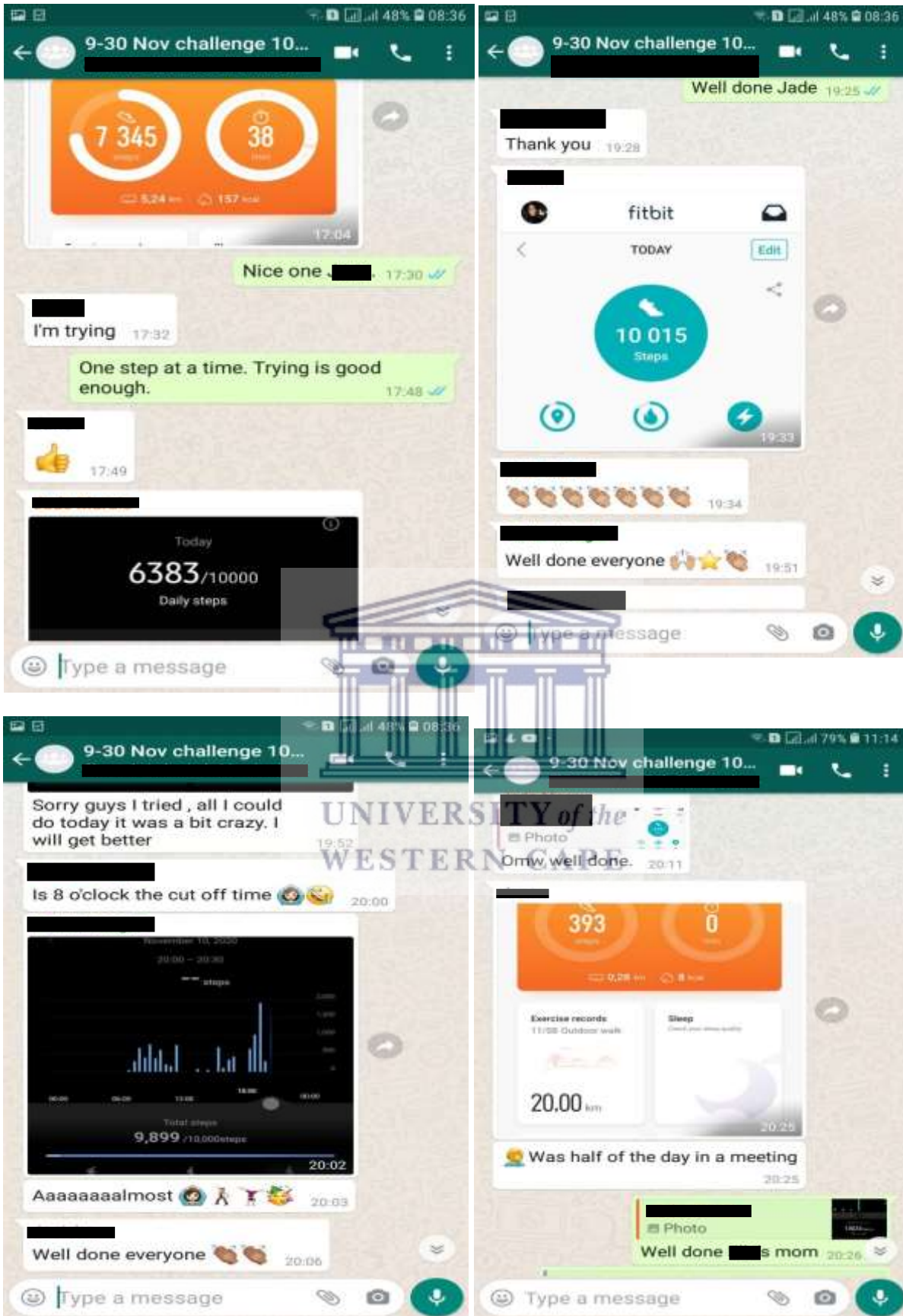


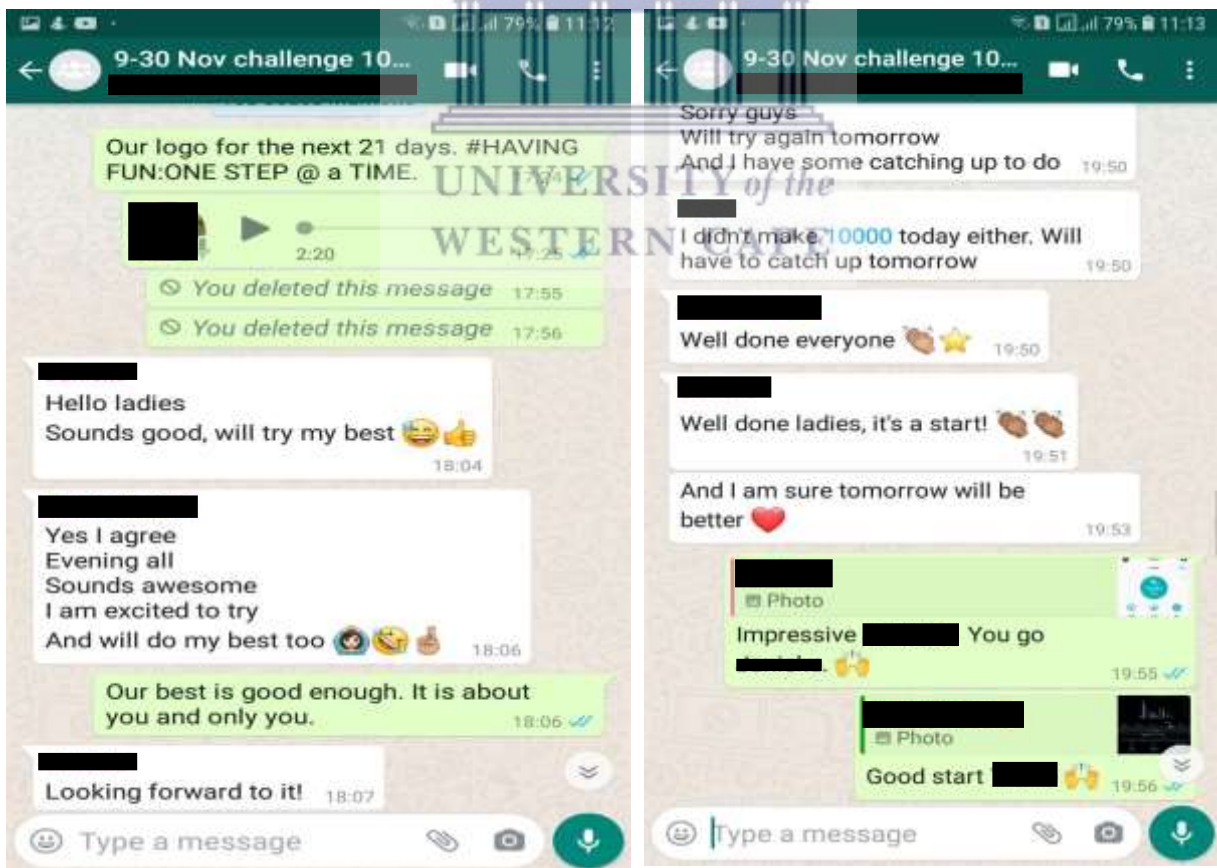
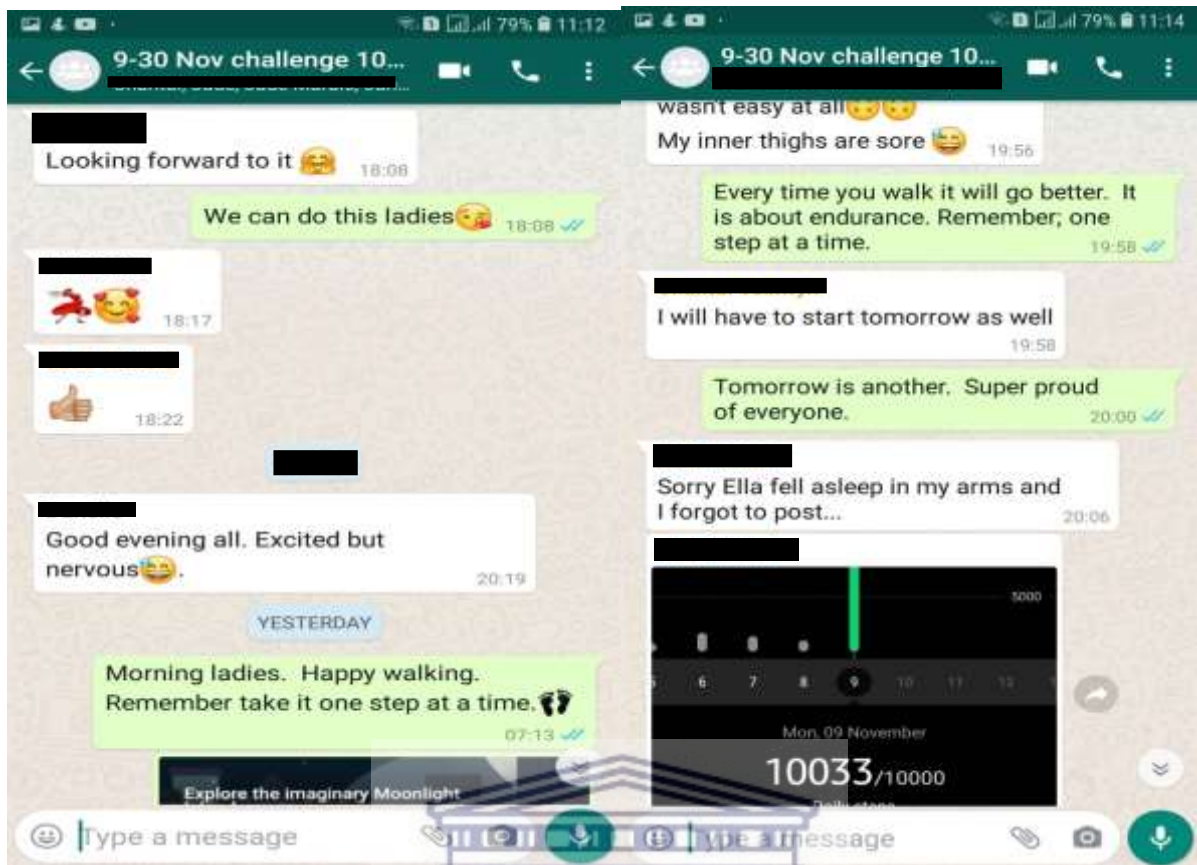


29 December 2020 – 18 January 2021



9 – 30 November 2020

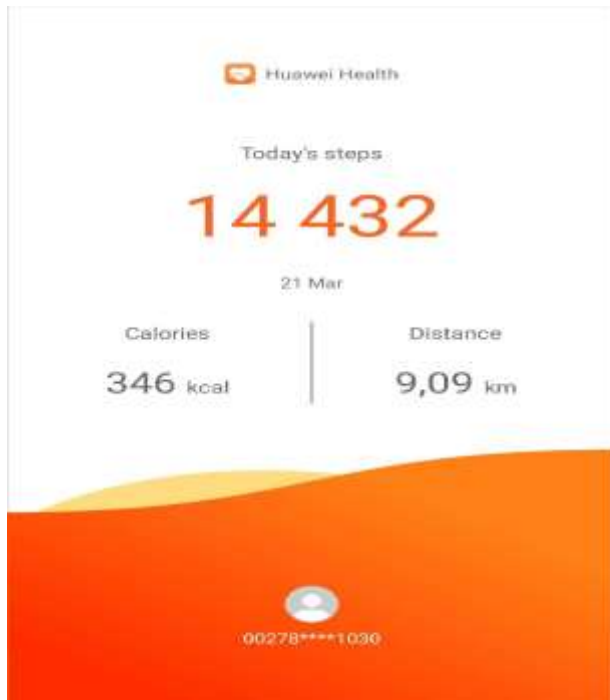




29 December 2020 – 18 January 2021



12 March – 8 April 2021



22 Mar 2021



10 598
Steps



7,73
Km



3 198
Cals



24 Mar 2021



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23 Mar 2021



10 731
Steps



8,44
Km



2 871
Cals



7,378
Steps



5,41
Km

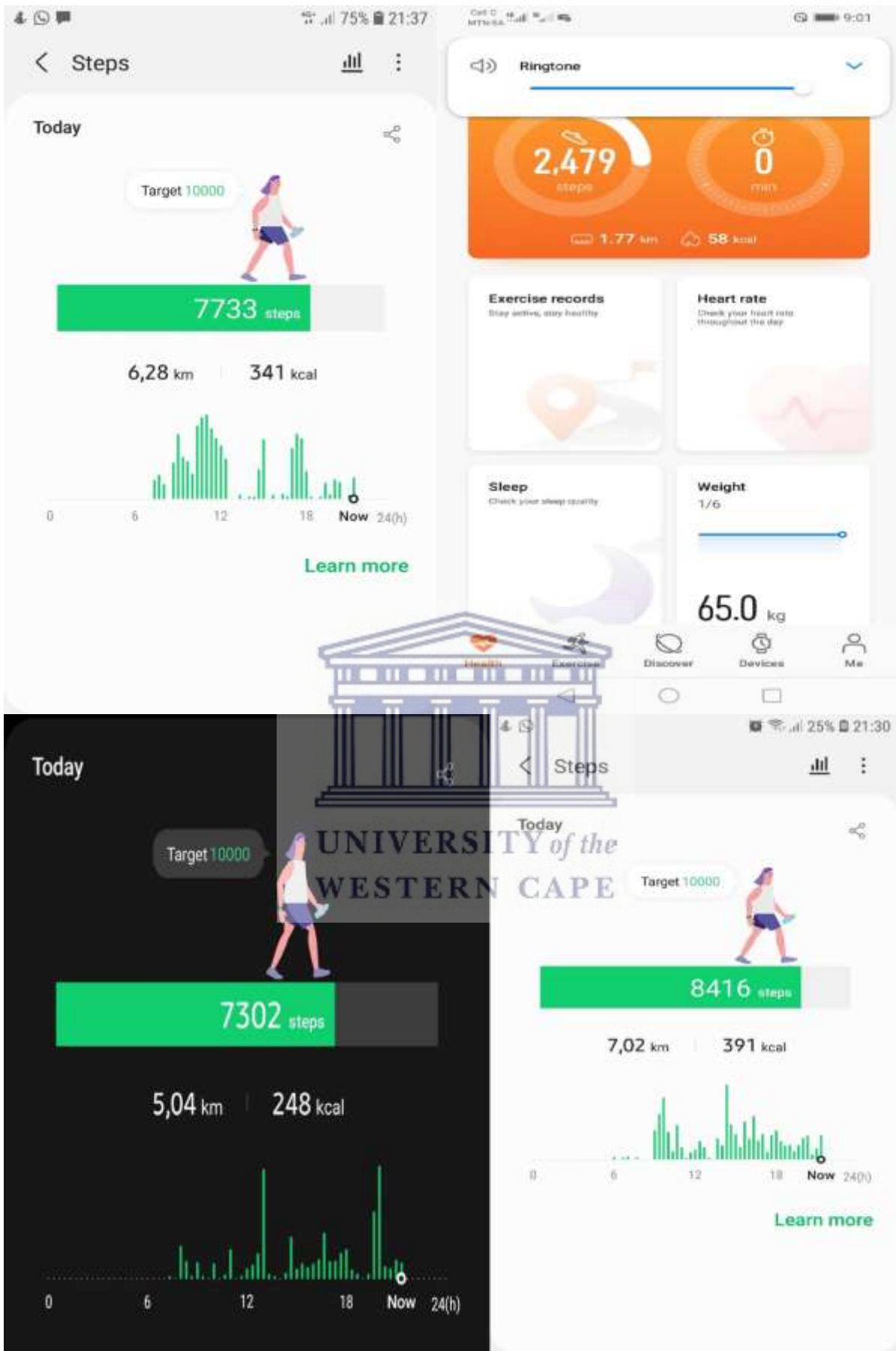


2,683
Cals

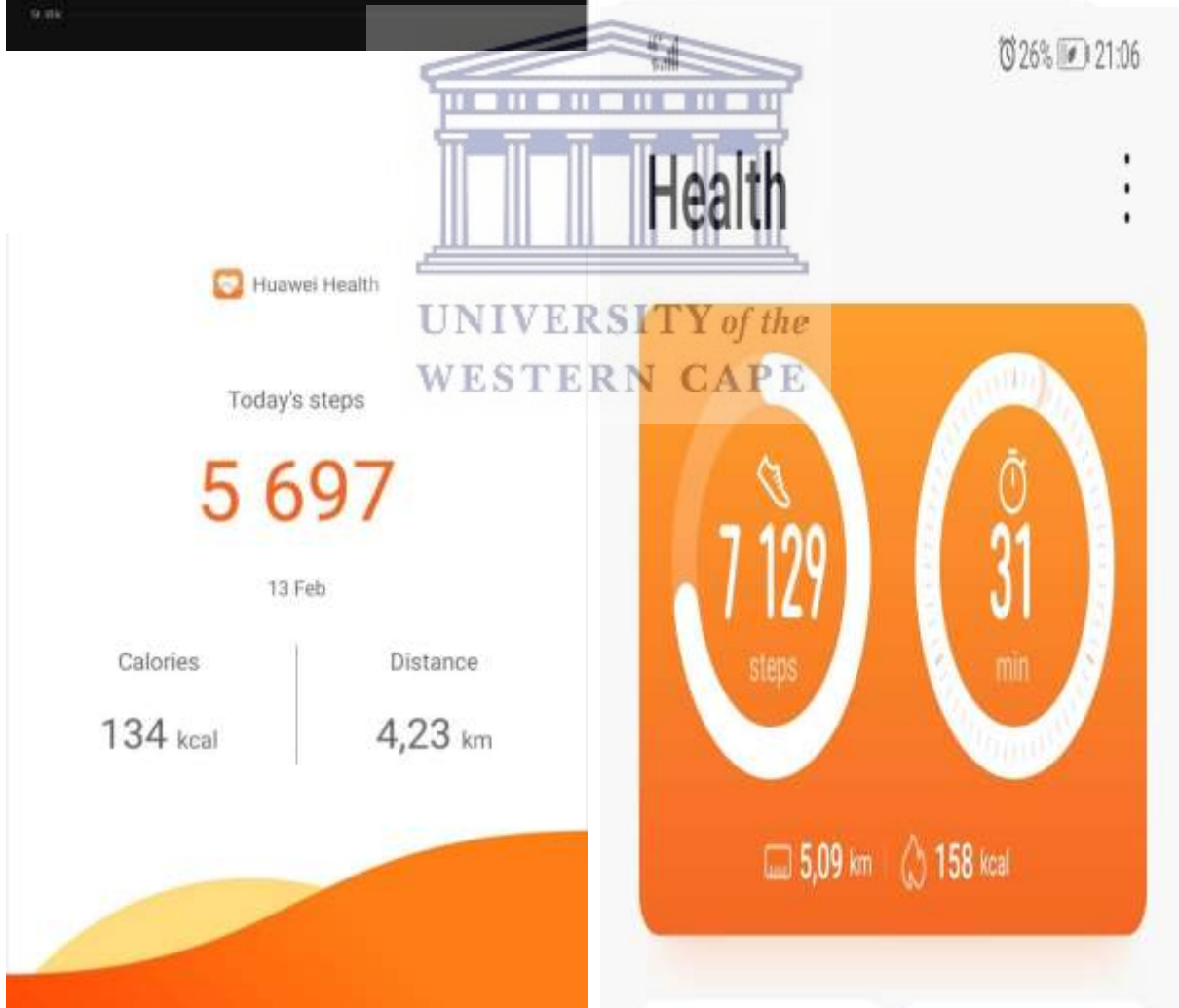
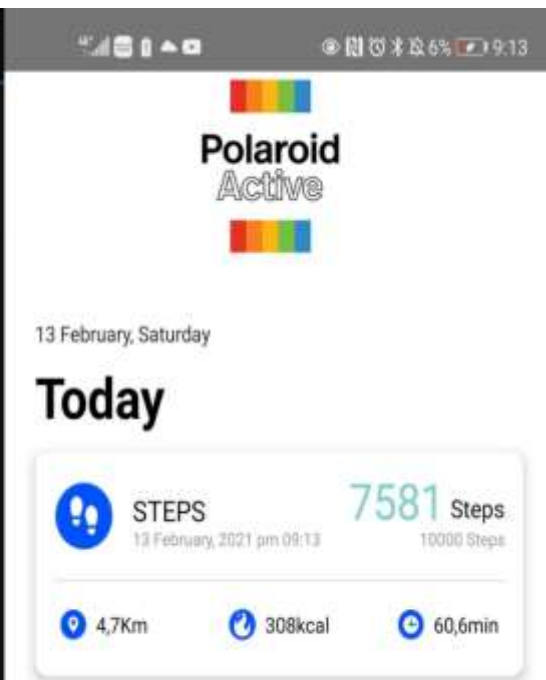


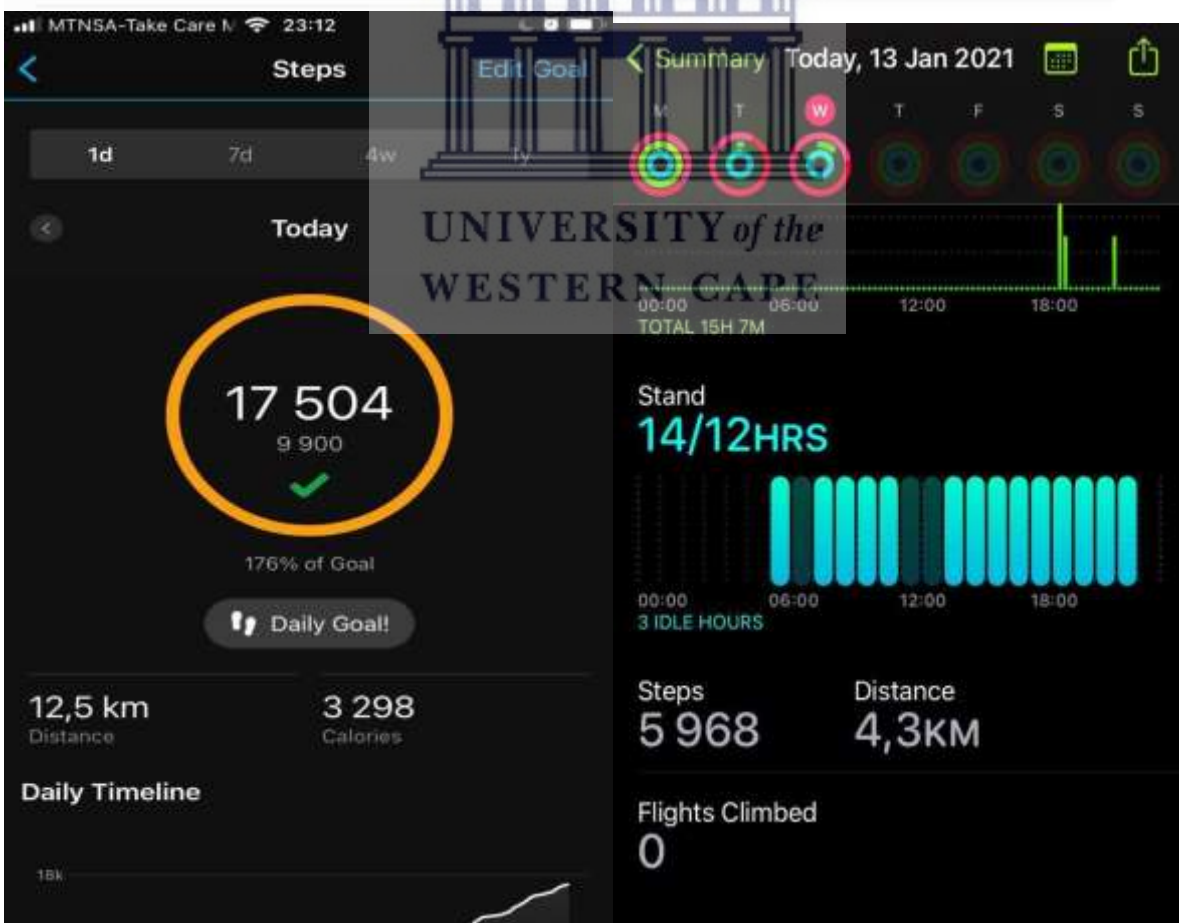
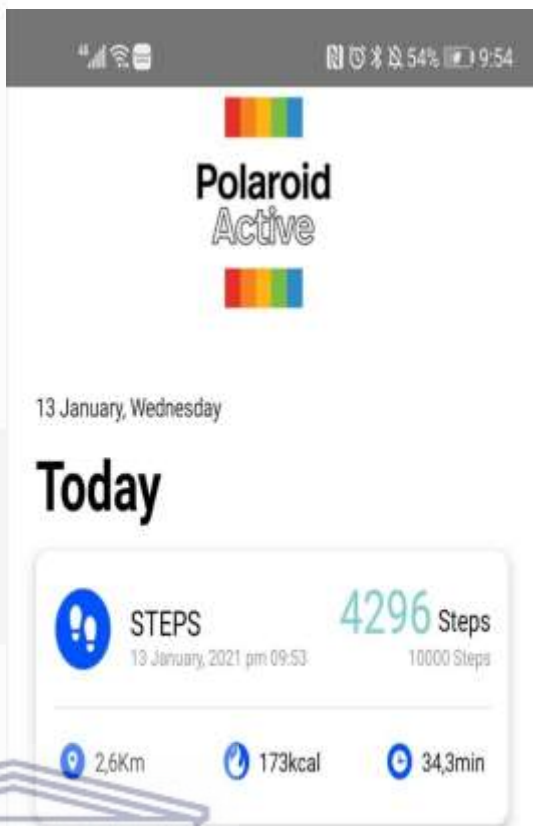


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22 January – 13 February 2021







Appendix 7: Interview participants

*Confidentiality: names have been replaced with P1, P2....

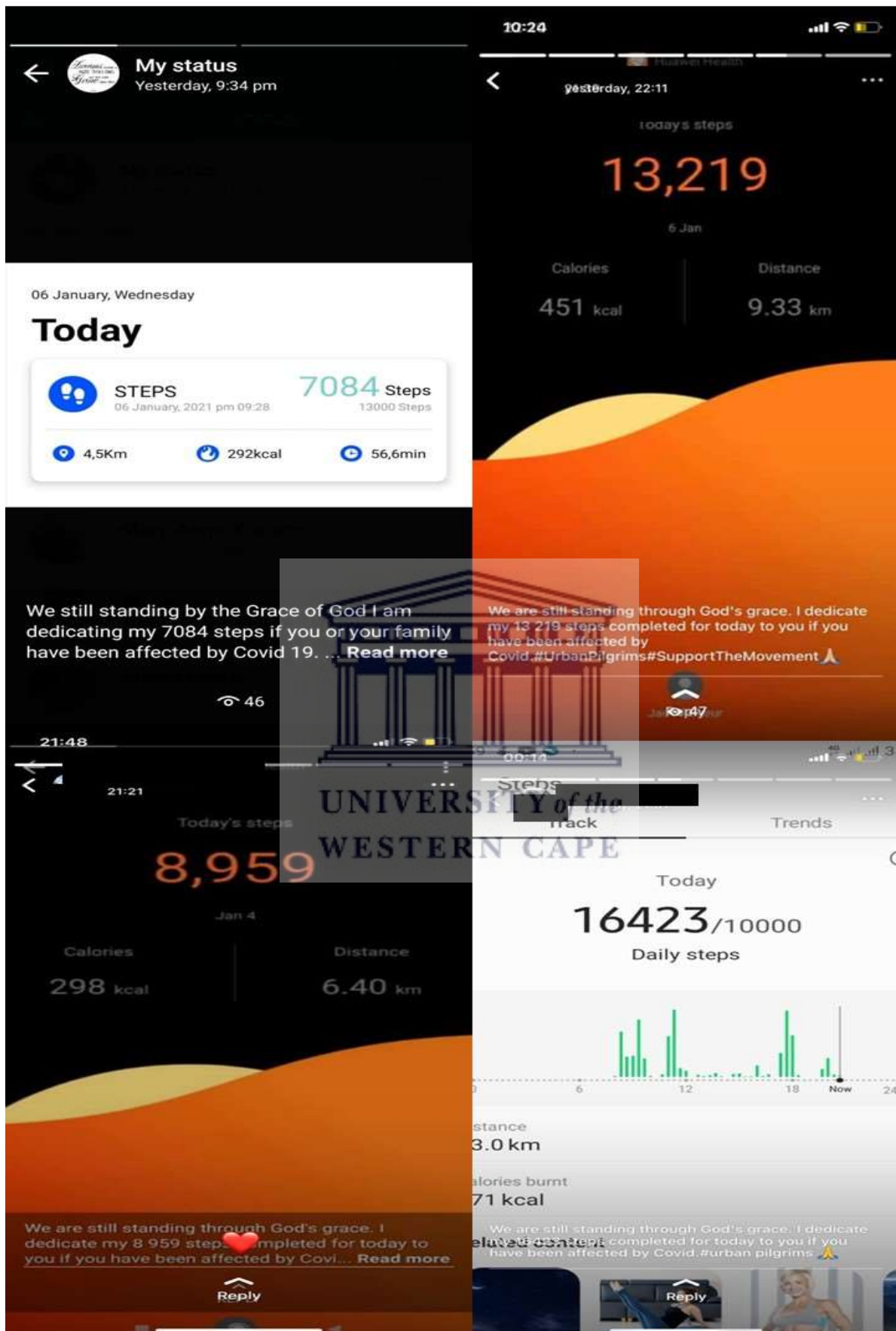
*INTERVIEWEE	GENDER	AGE CATEGORY
P1	Female	50-59
P2	Male	40-49
P3	Female	50-59
P4	Female	40-49
P5	Female	>60
P6	Female	50-59
P7	Female	20-29
P8	Female	30-39
P9	Female	40-49
P10	Female	30-39
P11	Female	50-59
P12	Female	30-39
P13	Female	>60
P14	Female	20-29
P15	Male	40-49
P16	Male	50-59
P17	Male	40-49
P18	Male	>60
P19	Male	40-49
P20	Male	20-29
P21	Male	>60
P22	Female	40-49
P23	Female	40-49
P24	Female	20-29
P25	Male	>60
P26	Female	>60
P27	Female	30-39
P28	Female	40-49
P29	Female	30-39
P30	Female	50-59
P31	Female	30-39
P32	Female	30-39
P33	Female	40-49
P34	Female	30-39
P35	Male	30-39
P36	Male	30-39
P37	Male	40-49
P38	Male	20-29
P39	Female	50-59
P40	Female	20-29
P41	Female	40-49
P42	Male	20-29
P43	Female	20-29
P44	Female	40-49

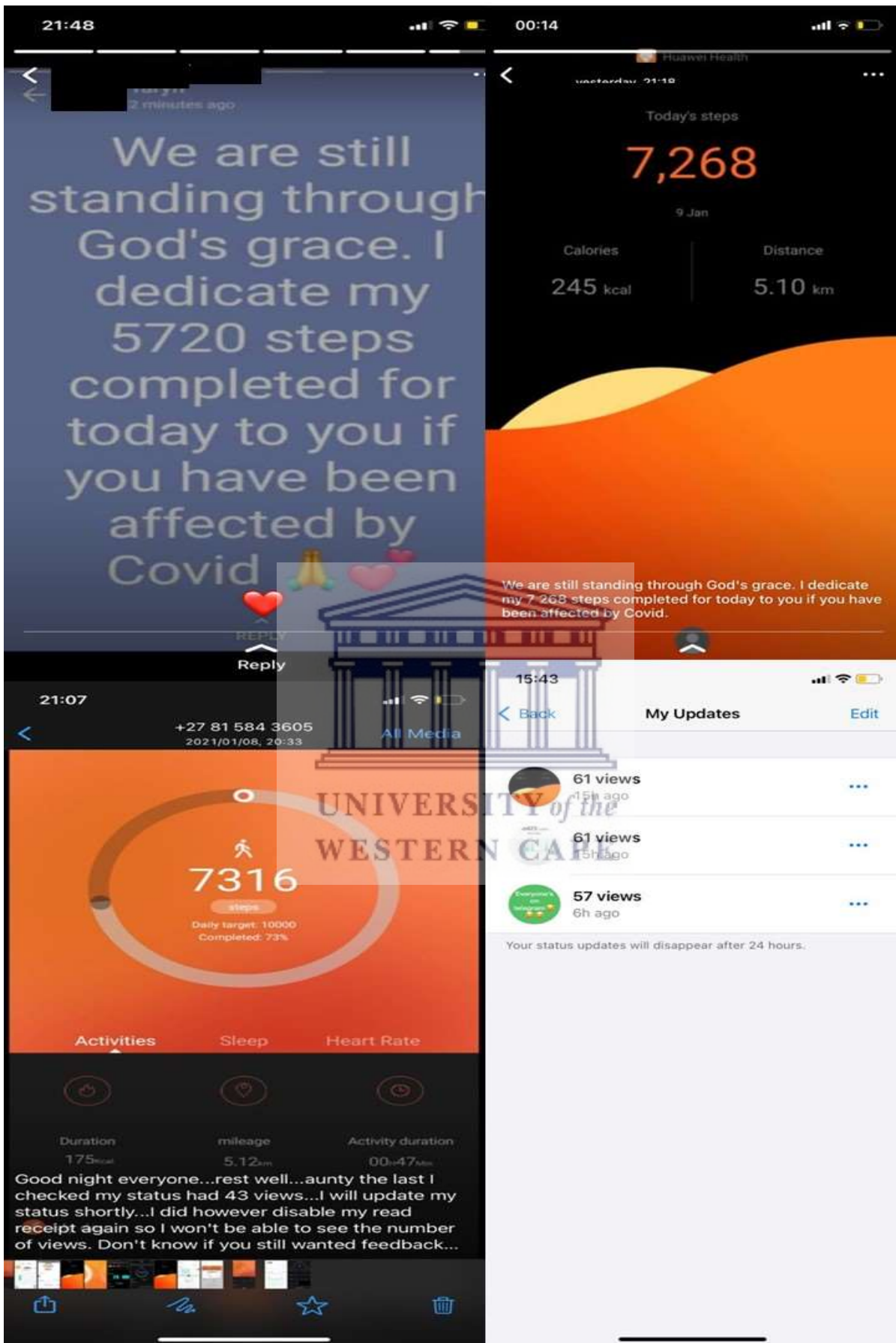
P45	Female	50-59
P46	Female	30-39
P47	Female	30-39
P48	Female	40-49
P49	Female	40-49
P50	Male	30-39
P51	Male	20-29
P52	Male	20-29



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Appendix 8: Steps dedication





Appendix 9: Notes

My friend is looking for motivation and she wants to join the group. What are our daily target?

Walking in my area is a bit difficult. Some areas have bushes and it is not safe but I will put every effort to complete 10 000 steps.

10k steps is a nice goal to walk towards. It forces one to push and keep busy.

Happy walking ladies all of the best.

Thank you, had to pace myself still recovering. I could only walk inside my house.

I'm sitting with a bomb out story with these apps as well...and yes God never fails. This is me today, I will push tomorrow.

I added more steps, felt inspired.

Not my best. Will try harder tomorrow.

I walked this morning and this afternoon again. I made a friend yesterday.

I wish I had someone to walk early with.

Big improvement since yesterday.

Wow, well done everyone.

Ladies, I would like for us to walk together if possible on Sunday. St. James coastal walk, your thoughts?

Sounds like a nice idea, I am in.

Sis you pulling me out of my Sunday morning comfort zone, but it's all good.... Come on we can do this says the Sunday morning lie in person...

We can carpool or meet up in Muizenberg.

My steps very low since the start. Very busy with online work and past couple of days quite a few muggings in our area. So not safe to walk.

My chest a bit tight. It's been a struggle but I will post yesterday and today's.

I'm borrowing my dad's watch and I'm struggling to let it sync with my phone. My watch stopped working 2 days ago. Will get it all sorted soonest.

Night night everyone, rest well.



Enjoy the walk ladies.

Looks lovely. Some of us are slaving.

Thank you for this morning ladies, it was such a brilliant walk and a great way to end off a weekend. I'm knackered and calling it a day...at least I made the target. Have a good evening and a great week.

It was a lovely morning, can't wait for Saturday.

Congratulations, clever teacher.

Congratulations, looking forward to meet you.

It was a hectic day at school today, but it paid off. Morning ladies. Are we walking together on Saturday?

We can always do it again, once the wave is over. It's too risky. I was looking forward to it but in hindsight...at least we can still keep track of our daily steps.

One of these days. If feel you...

I am exhausted, this is a tough job. Will be worth it in the long run though.

You will get through this. Don't worry God will never forsake us. I'm here to get my body moving.

Me too, I'm here to be motivated and inspired to stay active. Same here.

Wow ladies. Next level. Definitely, goals.

Today was a more relaxed day for me.

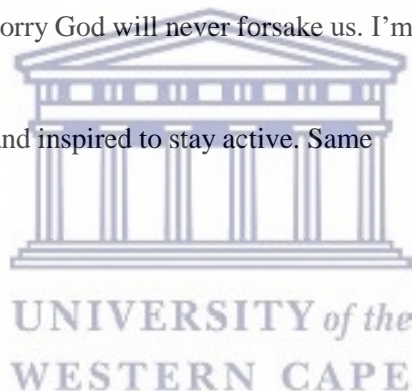
Every step counts.

Went walking and my phone was in the pram, so my steps never picked up.

Have not been walking much due to staying home. Too scared to out during these crazy times.

Congratulations to Walker X for completing her BA degree in Psychology. Super proud of you friend.

Woo hoo congratulations. Wow, well done.



Thank you very much everyone.

21 days done and dusted. The name of this challenge is consistency, consistency, consistency...

Can we carry on please?

I like the idea. I think every month we should just review. I love this group and just documenting steps. It really motivates me. Especially seeing everyone so dedicated.

Morning ladies, thank you for an awesome challenge. It motivated me to try and push myself to walk every day. All the best to those who are going to carry on.

I would join. Walker Y.

Morning, I will join again. Walker Z. Yes, me too. Walker A.

I'll continue. Walker B.

I would like to continue as well. Walker C. All the best ladies, we can do this.

Thanks for the encouragement.



Appendix 10: Virtual notes

