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Mapping Pilgrims' Experience of Walking the Saint James Way Through the Lens of Self-regulation

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Cover Page Footnote

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Mapping Pilgrims' Experience of Walking the Saint James Way Through the Lens of Self-regulation

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The Way of St. James is a very well-known and ancient pilgrimage, with various routes leading pilgrims to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Spain, where the remains of Saint James are buried. Over the last few years, the experience of the pilgrimage and the growing number of pilgrims walking the Saint James Way have been attracting researchers' attention. However, studies attempting to understand the pilgrims' experience using a self-regulation lens are limited. Self-regulation may be defined as efforts made to manage individuals' thoughts, emotions, and behaviours in the pursuit of long-term goals. Therefore, rooted in the self-regulation framework, this research aims to further understand the Saint James Way with a focus on the pilgrims' experience, while stressing the three components of the model: planning, execution, and evaluation. The interviews of 32 Portuguese pilgrims aged between 16 and 52 were analysed using thematic analysis through Zimmerman's model. Pilgrims made important considerations on the three phases of the self-regulation framework. Importantly, participants' discourses stressed relevant elements of the process of doing a pilgrimage, placing a particular emphasis on the interest and value of the pilgrimage, strategic planning, strategy usage, metacognitive monitoring, self-assessment and, finally, self-satisfaction. Interestingly, some participants revealed superficial planning and a lack of self-monitoring strategies on the journey. The study provides new avenues for research and practical implications likely to enhance the quality of the pilgrimage by helping pilgrims and pilgrim organisers.

Key Words: Camino de Santiago, Saint James Way, pilgrimage, self-regulation, will and skill

Introduction

According to the official website of pilgrims ('Oficina del Peregrino', <https://oficinadelperegrino.com/estadisticas2/>), each year, thousands of pilgrims from more than sixty countries make a long journey along the medieval pilgrimage road known as the 'Saint James Way'. This is an important Christian pilgrimage centre,

attracting pilgrims traveling by foot, bicycle, or horseback to reach the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Spain (Lois-González & Santos, 2015). For those who travel by foot, the journey should be at least 100 kilometres, walked in stages of 20 to 40 kilometres per day. Pilgrims walk the way in unpredictable and harsh weather conditions. The journey requires motivation and robust self-regulation skills.

* The authors disclose that the current article is derived from the Master's thesis of Clara Vieira. Clara Vieira and Jennifer Cunha contributed equally in the authorship of this paper and should be recognised as co-first authors.

Regardless of the reasons that lead pilgrims to make the journey (e.g., religious, spiritual, tourism, or sports-

related), most pilgrims share a common general goal: to reach the sanctuary. To attain goals in life, Winne (1997) suggests that every person needs to self-regulate their behaviours. Self-regulation may be defined as efforts made to manage individuals' thoughts, emotions, and behaviours in the pursuit of long-term goals (Pina *et al.*, 2010). In this sense, pilgrims who self-regulate their behaviours analyse the demands of the task, select the resources to face them, and seek support whenever necessary to attain their goals. Therefore, a deeper understanding of how these processes are structurally interrelated and cyclically sustained is crucial to improving the quality of the journey and the well-being of the pilgrims.

Zimmerman's model of Self-Regulation (2008), used in the educational psychology field, provides a relevant theoretical framework for this study. Self-regulation is an important skill to help individuals attain not only learning but also life-related goals (Zimmerman, 2002). The model describes how individuals set goals, monitor their progress, and reflect on their performance, following an interactivity loop. Importantly, each phase is influenced by the one immediately preceding it and influences the following phase (Zimmerman, 2000).

From Zimmerman's (2000) perspective, self-regulatory processes and associated beliefs fall into three cyclical phases: forethought, performance or volitional control, and self-reflection processes. The forethought phase refers to the processes preceding the efforts to act: task analysis and self-motivational beliefs. Task analysis involves goals setting and strategic planning. These involve selecting or building strategies suited for the task and its setting (Zimmerman & Campillo, 2003:239-240). Literature considers four self-motivational beliefs associated with this phase:

- a) self-efficacy, which refers to personal beliefs in the ability to learn or perform effectively (Bandura, 1997);
- b) outcome expectations, which refer to beliefs about the ultimate ends of performance (Bandura, 1997),
- c) task interest/value, which refers to individuals' perceptions of the importance of the task, and finally,
- d) goal orientation, which addresses whether the focus is on the process or the output.

The forethought phase influences the performance phase. The latter addresses the self-regulation processes activated while individuals perform the tasks and requires the integration of self-control and self-observation processes (Zimmerman, 2000: 18-19). Self-control processes (e.g., self-instruction, imagery, attention focusing, and task strategies) help individuals to focus on the task and optimise their efforts. Self-observation refers to the ability to track specific aspects of one's own performance, the conditions that surround it, and the effects it produces (Zimmerman & Paulsen, 1995: 19-20). The performance phase influences the self-reflection phase by encompassing processes resulting from the action accomplished (i.e., self-judgment and self-reaction). The former involves self-evaluating one's performance using a criterion and attributing causal significance to results closely linked to two key forms of self-reactions, such as self-satisfaction and adaptive reactions. In fact, individuals facing outputs resulting from their performance may adjust their behaviours to improve results, or rather, display defensive reactions and avoid making any changes (Zimmerman, 2000:21-24).

Understanding the structure and functioning of this self-regulation cycle (Zimmerman, 2008) is crucial to further examining the role pilgrims play in the pilgrimage process (e.g., the agency displayed). Self-regulatory processes subsume the concepts of motivation and cognition; the emphasis is on their interrelation. This idea is expressed in the literature as 'Will' and 'Skill' (motivation and competence), which are understood as two faces of the same coin (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002; Zimmerman, 2000). McCombs and Marzano (1990) define the 'Will' component as a complex net of elements (e.g., system of values, personal self-development, and affect and mood) that interact to generate people's desires and shape their intentional choices towards a goal. 'Skill' was described as an acquired cognitive or metacognitive competency likely to be developed with training and deliberate practice (McCombs & Marzano, 1990). Pilgrims, throughout their journey, develop an understanding of their agentic role in the process, translated, for example, into their ability to act responsibly to achieve self-set goals. This 'Will' component, despite being crucial to the enhancement of self-regulation, is not sufficient to reach the final destination. Alongside a strong will, pilgrims

also need to display the ‘Skill’ component to help them attain self-set goals (Weinstein *et al.*, 2011).

To the best of our knowledge, prior research on the Saint James Way has focused on investigating the ‘Will’ side of the self-regulation coin. Amaro and colleagues (2018), Kurrat (2019) and Aulet (2020) have all examined the motivational processes that grounded pilgrims’ reasons to enrol in pilgrimage (e.g., searching for new experiences; fulfilling a religious promise; searching for peace; surpassing personal crisis etc.). However, the literature lacks studies on the ‘skill’ side of the self-regulation coin (e.g., pilgrims’ self-regulation efforts to plan their journey, to walk the way while monitoring progress and to overcome obstacles despite hardships, and to reflect on the lessons learned). Furthermore, previous research under the self-regulation framework has been mostly focused on the educational area by investigating self-regulation processes in schools and universities (Rosário *et al.*, 2016; Zimmerman, 2002). The current study aims to fill this gap by exploring the pilgrimage experience using the self-regulation process model (i.e., ‘Will’ and ‘Skill’ facets) as a theoretical lens to analyse data. We believe this study adds to the existing literature in two ways:

- (i) there is limited research on the pilgrimage process using a self-regulation approach, and;
- (ii) current findings may help support pilgrims as well as pilgrimage organisers in their efforts to improve support for pilgrims’ self-regulatory needs.

This study analyses the process of pilgrimage on the Saint James Way (i.e., planning, execution and evaluation) through the voices of the pilgrims, using Zimmerman’s (2008) self-regulation model (i.e., forethought, performance, and self-reflection). The following research questions are grounded on the latter and guided the current study:

- How do pilgrims perceive their preparation for the Saint James Way?
- What leads people to move forward and attain their goals?
- How do pilgrims evaluate their journey?

Method

Participants

The present study is part of a larger investigation into the perspectives of pilgrims and pilgrimage organisers throughout their journeys on the Saint James Way. For the purposes of the current study, only the pilgrims’ data were analysed. Participants who were considered as ‘pilgrims’ for this work had to have travelled at least 100 kilometres along the Saint James Way. This is the minimum distance required to receive a Compostela certificate (Reader, 2007).

Initially, there were 37 participants, but three were excluded for not meeting the mentioned inclusion criterion, and two for not having reported their personal experience as pilgrims. For those reasons, 32 individuals who completed the Saint James Way at least once participated in the current study. Participants travelled from distinct starting points in Portugal and Spain (e.g., Porto, Valença, Sarria) across different routes (i.e., the Portuguese or French Way). All participants made this pilgrimage by foot and in a group at least once.

The average number of times pilgrims had walked the Saint James Way was 2.41, ranging from once to 12 times. The pilgrims were Portuguese and aged between 16 and 52 years ($M = 32.03$, $DP = 10.00$); from this pool, 21 were women (65.6%). Regarding their education, 71.9% of participants had completed at least a bachelor’s degree, 25.0% were studying in high school or at university¹, and 3.1% of participants had not completed compulsory education. Seventy-five percent of the participants were professionally active.

Data Collection

Data were collected using a semi-structured interview format. The interviewer met the interviewee at a time and location of the latter’s convenience (i.e. University facilities, residential home) in a quiet room. The

¹ Note: The participating students made their journey on the Saint James Way in a pilgrimage organised by their schools; all students enrolled voluntarily and all aspects of the research were undertaken within strict ethical guidelines, including the provision of parents’ and pupils’ informed consent.

interviewer informed participants about the steps of the interview process, and all signed an informed consent form in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki. Confidentiality issues were also addressed, and all participants were given the possibility to end the interview at any time. Individual data (i.e., age, gender, education, occupation, and the number of times they had completed this pilgrimage) were collected at this stage. Finally, participants were asked five open-ended questions based on the three cyclical phases of self-regulatory processes (forethought, performance or volitional control, and self-reflection):

Forethought Phase:

What was the previous preparation (physical, spiritual, psychological, logistical) for this journey?

Performance Phase:

What strategies / guidelines were followed in your preparation for this pilgrimage?

What helped you travel through the Saint James Way?

Self-reflection Phase:

Tell me about a situation that you consider very positive during the journey.

Tell me about a situation that you consider very negative during the journey.

Data Analysis

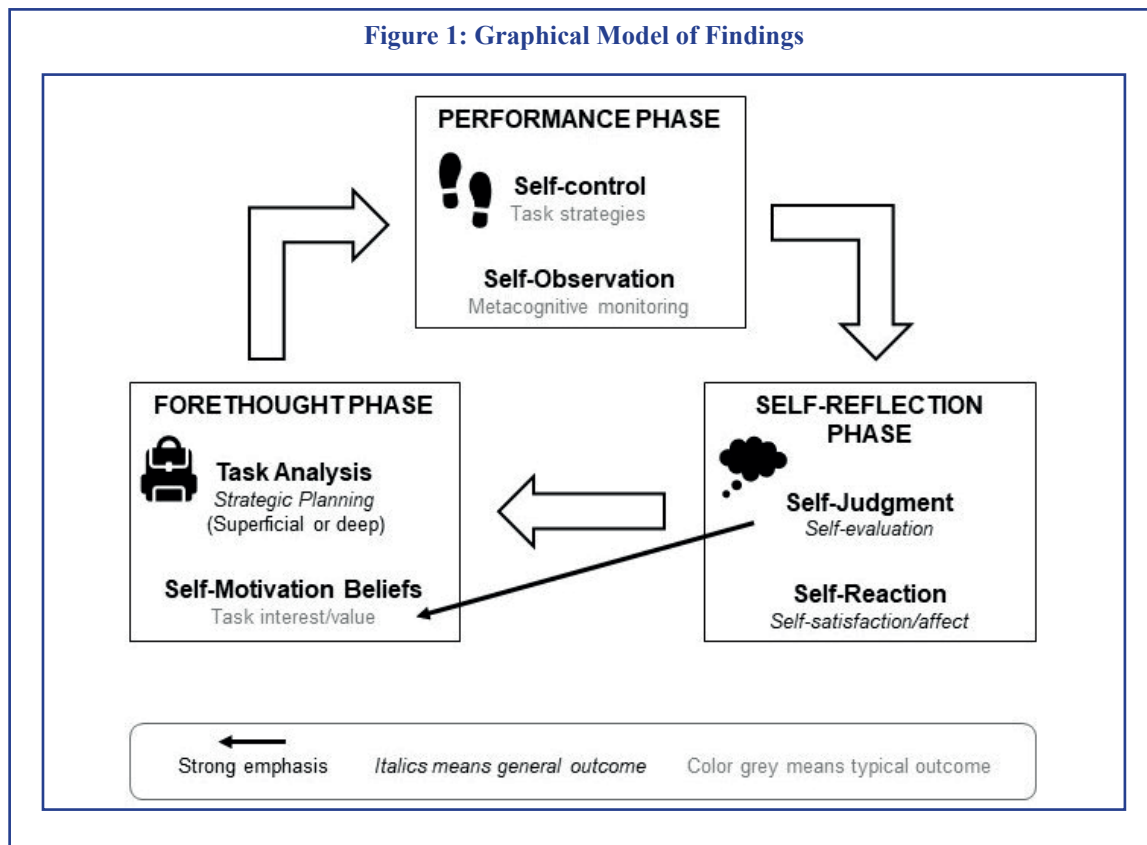
Participants' answers were transcribed verbatim, and a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was performed using NVivo. According to these authors, thematic analysis is a useful method for organising and describing the data set, identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (2006:79). In this sense, thematic analysis is a method suited to mapping pilgrims' experiences.

This method suggests a recursive process based on six steps: 1) familiarising with data; 2) generating initial codes; 3) searching for themes; 4) reviewing themes; 5) redefining and renaming themes if necessary, and 6) producing the report. The identification of themes follows an inductive or deductive approach.

In the current study, data sets were coded based on a codebook purposely adapted for this study, following a deductive process at a semantic level (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes (i.e., Forethought Phase, Performance Phase, Self-Reflection Phase), subthemes (e.g., Task Analysis, Self-observation, Self-judgment) and sub-sub-themes (e.g., Strategic Planning, Task Strategies, Self-evaluation) were based on the model by Zimmerman (2008).

Then, the participants' discourses were analysed against the themes in the codebook. Importantly, the number of participants who mentioned propositions related to these themes was used as a criterion to identify in our data set the themes in the codebook. By counting the number of participants whose discourse was coded in a predetermined theme, it is possible to identify its representativeness in the data sets.

Categories were reported following the criteria by Hill *et al.* (2005:12), using labels of general outcomes (i.e., the theme is present in responses from 31, 96.9%, or 32, 100%, participants) and typical outcomes (the theme was identified in responses from at least 16, 50.0%, but no more than 30, 93.8%, participants). The goal was to find salient patterns among the pilgrims' discourse. For this reason, variant outcomes (4-15 cases) and rare categories (2 or 3 cases) were not reported. Two researchers knowledgeable about the self-regulation theoretical framework coded the transcripts independently (the second researcher coded 20% of the interviews). Cohen's κ coefficient showed an interrater agreement of 0.87, which is considered 'almost perfect' according to Landis and Koch (1977:165). Afterwards, both researchers met to discuss any discrepancies found in the coding process (e.g., one researcher coded 'It was not a stop to eat food, it was a stop to pray [...]. It helped me a lot to calm down' as Task Strategies, while the other researcher did not) and to further reach an agreement on such discrepancies. In this case, both researchers agreed to code this material as Task Strategies. At the end of this step, both researchers reread all the transcripts independently to check all the coded material (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the end, a matrix-coding query was conducted by crossing nodes with attributes, (e.g., gender, occupation status, number of times pilgrims had walked the Saint James Way) in order to explore possible patterns within the coded data



based on attributes (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). For the purpose of this study, only new patterns of findings were reported.

Results

Interviews provided data to answer the research questions. A summary of the themes, including descriptions and exemplary quotes from the participants' interviews, is provided below. Figure 1 illustrates the main findings and the linkage between each phase of the pilgrims' self-regulatory process.

Theme 1: Forethought Phase

Participants reported having undergone preparatory processes prior to engaging in the pilgrimage. Two sub-themes were identified from these reports: task interest / value and strategic planning. Most pilgrims stressed the interest and value of the pilgrimage as

an old wish dreamt many times (P39).

Pilgrims, those preparing to undertake the journey for the first time as well as repeaters, reported that the pilgrimage was something they had wanted to do for a long time.

Repeaters added that after completing the Saint James Way, the experience was so enthralling that they felt the need to repeat it.

While describing the type of preparation done, data indicated two main approaches: pilgrims who barely prepared for the journey and those who were deeply engaged in planning their journey. The former reported a display of low effort (i.e., physical, psychological, or spiritual) to prepare for their journey. When asked to further elaborate, they justified their behaviour as being influenced by a lack of the time needed for this task (e.g., heavy workload) or the knowledge regarding the demanding psychological challenges of the pilgrimage

What I didn't know was that this [Saint James Way] is so challenging psychologically, fostering deep thoughts on several aspects of our life (P21).

On the other hand, about half of those pilgrims interviewed provided details on the efforts made to prepare for the journey. Participants used two sources of information to gather data: the internet and 'expert' pilgrims. For example, participants collected information on must-check topics before starting their journey, such as the

recommended walking distance per day, information on the hostels along the way, strategic spots to pause or shop, packing tips (e.g., proper clothes, energetic food), and information collected during the walk (e.g., daily meteorological conditions).

Theme 2: Performance Phase

While disclosing their experience along the Saint James Way, the majority of pilgrims reported behaviours that can be understood under the label of self-control strategies. For example, pilgrims mentioned strategies that helped them throughout the path and that allowed them to reach St. James Cathedral, the ultimate goal. The reported strategies were as follows:

- (i) traveling in a group, as the presence of people undertaking similar walking efforts helped them feel accompanied;
- (ii) praying and reflecting, as one participant noted, *It was not a stop to eat food, it was a stop to pray (...). It helped me a lot to calm down* (P11);
- (iii) trying to keep the pace at the right speed and managing the pauses to rest, *as for walking strategies, we tried not to stop for too long* (P3);
- (iv) getting up and starting to walk early in order to stay cool on hot weather walks, and;
- (v) keeping the mind focused on the final goal, *we had to try to get out on time, arrive on time, and organise our time to achieve that* (P1).

Participants reported that these strategies were fundamental in transforming the experience from ‘just walking’ to an opportunity to take advantage of other dimensions of the pilgrimage journey and have a full experience of the Saint James Way (e.g., partnership of the pilgrim group, the beautiful landscape, or inner growth). Moreover, several pilgrims mentioned having taken the time for brief reflections on their experiences along the journey (e.g., challenges and emergent needs felt along the Saint James Way). When asked to elaborate on the strategies used to cope with the challenges of the tasks at hand, some pilgrims reported organised thoughts that were identified as matching the sub-theme of metacognitive monitoring. One pilgrim explained this idea by giving an example of a line of thoughts,

If we keep walking at this pace, today I can do it, but tomorrow I will not be able to keep walking at this fast pace. I'm not able to maintain this fast-moving pace for a long time, I have to follow a comfortable gait speed (P11).

Other pilgrims reported their use of mental exercises likely to help them accomplish everyday goals. For example, they reported reflecting on the impact of their actions on other pilgrims:

Many times I thought, 'Fortunately, this person is by my side ... and I am by her side ... I help her, and she helps me.' (P29).

This thought pattern helped pilgrims maintain focus on their journey while preventing them from giving up. Lastly, the matrix-coding query indicated that the 45% of participants who were professionally active, or 63% of students reported this metacognitive monitoring. Data indicate that a higher percentage of students reported on-going efforts to reflect on their performance than did professionally active participants.

Theme 3: Self-reflection Phase

Pilgrims described the efforts made to evaluate their experience along the Saint James Way. All participants mentioned that they took time throughout the journey to reflect on the positive and negative aspects of the pilgrimage. As a major positive aspect, pilgrims highlighted the benefits of group travel to help them complete the Saint James Way. One participant stated,

Above all, I think the group [positive relationships within] encourages people to overcome hardships and walk the way (P1).

Several pilgrims characterised this pilgrimage as a personal quest. Still, they added that peers played an important role in helping them achieve proximal and distal goals:

The motivation and joy we can share with and from the people who walk with us is powerful and an important source of energy ... This joy, this wish to arrive and share all the lessons of the Way of Saint James, I believe, is the great motivation (P1).

Furthermore, participants elaborated on the important role played by group context. Pilgrims stressed that group contexts have the potential for modelling the process of delivering support and encouragement towards goals. When asked to detail the benefits of group travel, participants mentioned that group travel helps to counterbalance the difficulties and challenges throughout the journey. For example, pilgrims reported using supportive messages or being the recipient of them to encourage each other to keep on track; initiating or being invited to conversations while walking to distract from the hardships of the walk; or even walking at a measured pace or in silence to ‘respect each one’s inner space’. As several participants shared, these are examples of strategies that in ‘the toughest moments’ are likely to prevent pilgrims from giving up walking.

Participants also reflected on the importance of engaging in prior preparation focused on spiritual and psychological aspects. Reports indicate that these modes of preparation served, or could have served, as a shield to the physical challenges faced along the way:

If I had done this spiritual previous preparation, I would have started this journey stronger and more focused (P1).

Or as another participant shared:

I believe, [overcoming the hardships through the Saint James Way] ... is not a matter of physical preparation or whatever; I think it is really a mental matter ... what we are or are not able to do mentally what our head tells us to do ... I think this is our greatest strength to get there [St. James Cathedral]. The most important thing we need to do to complete the Way to Santiago is always have in mind what we want to achieve regardless of all [hardships] (P38).

Some of the pilgrims expressed surprise at their own resilience and ability to cope with physically harsh experiences through the pilgrimage. Furthermore, they mentioned having developed a diverse set of skills through their involvement in the Saint James Way. Some claimed to have grown as a person:

I have become a different person and feel stronger as an individual (P22).

Others have improved their social (e.g., the quality of the relationships with others), spiritual (e.g., self-discovery) or physical skills (e.g., ability to do a long walk).

Finally, several propositions of the pilgrims were identified as matching the self-satisfaction / affect sub-theme. Some participants mentioned that their experience walking the Saint James Way was very positive, while many others mentioned that the pain felt throughout the journey was uncomfortable and a source of disaffection:

I felt pain recurrently, so the physical pain was very tough! (P13).

The former participants were very positive about the hardships that they endured, and further indicated that through their journeys, they were able to tolerate these feelings of discomfort without denying their existence. They reported being able to transform these negative feelings into positive ones and continuing to function in times of distress. For example, pilgrims stated:

At the end of the day, I look at my leg pains and foot pains as positive ... not everything in life is perfect and we suffer on a daily basis several types of pain with distinct intensities. So, feeling a little bit of physical pain in this context is not so bad (P28).

Finally, the interest and willingness to repeat the experience was shared by all pilgrims (see Figure 1):

It's like I said, next year I will be here again, God willing! (P2).

Discussion

Theme 1: Forethought Phase

Prior research on the Saint James Way analysed pilgrims’ motivations to make their journey (Lois-González & Santos, 2015; Amaro *et al.*, 2018; Kurrat, 2019) and the differences in the motives held by pilgrims (e.g., spiritual motives) and tourists (e.g., look for new challenges) to make the pilgrimage (Cazaux, 2011; Lois-González & Santos, 2015). Previous findings indicate that pilgrims are likely to complete the Saint James Way for various reasons, such as to seek new experiences and sensations, as an opportunity for spiritual growth, or to reflect on their pace of live or on changes needed to improve their personal development (Amaro *et al.*, 2018; Nilsson

& Tesfahuney, 2016; Kurrat, 2019; Seryczyńska, 2019). However, the literature lacks studies examining the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural processes contributing to pilgrims' success on their journeys. To the best of our knowledge, the current study is the first to explore pilgrims' experiences of the process of pilgrimage using a self-regulation lens. We believe that our data may contribute to extending current knowledge on pilgrims' experience of self-improvement and self-transformation (cf. Nilsson & Tesfahuney, 2016).

All pilgrims reported valuing the pilgrimage experience itself, with some participants reporting that walking the Saint James Way was sensed as achieving 'an old dream'. These findings are consistent with the literature on self-regulation, stressing the relevance of doing a task for its intrinsic rather than for its instrumental value (Bai & Wang, 2020; Zimmerman, 2002). The current data are also consistent with prior pilgrimage research, showing a revived interest in the pilgrimage experience and a steady growth in the number of pilgrims (Reader, 2007; Shinde, 2007), particularly those walking the Saint James Way (Nilsson & Tesfahuney, 2016).

Concerning preparation for the pilgrimage, we found that one group of participants was deeply engaged in this activity, while others barely planned for the pilgrimage at all. Prior research has mapped reasons that may explain superficial preparation. For example, Yates (2013) suggests that pilgrims' overconfidence in their ability to meet the challenges of the journey may be a result of the aggressive and sophisticated marketing campaigns of the companies that sell equipment to help meet the physical challenges of pilgrimage.

Another aspect is related to the fact that participants did their pilgrimages in a group. These pilgrims might have underestimated the importance of the forethought phase, as they were heavily relying on the organisers of the pilgrimage, whom they believed would take care of the planning process for them. In fact, when traveling in a group, as occurred with our participants, one or two organisers are responsible for the preparatory phase, in which they set a plan that is likely to include, for example, best routes and detailed maps, reservation of accommodation for each night, timetables and spots to rest, and restaurants to have meals. This pack of

information may have discouraged pilgrims' personal efforts to prepare for the walking journey.

This is consistent with the primary data, indicating that some participants mentioned having made *ad hoc* planning actions by searching the internet for general tips and suggestions on things to pack. In addition, participants reported having prior experience with the Saint James Way (46.9% of participants did the pilgrimage more than once). Pilgrims with vast prior experience may under value the preparation stages of their following pilgrimages, as prior successes tend to lead people to belief in one's ability to perform a similar task in the future (Zimmerman & Campillo, 2003). Despite pilgrims' confidence in their previous experience of pilgrimage, as Havard (2007) alerted, a lack of preparation can lead to discomfort, injury, or drop-out. Therefore, our findings may call the attention of researchers and organisers of pilgrimages to the need to promote pilgrims' personal agency and engagement in the first phase of the self-regulation process.

Theme 2: Performance Phase

Reflecting on their experience on the path, many pilgrims mentioned behaviours and sequences of activities purposely utilised to achieve self-set goals (Zimmerman & Cleary, 2009). Pilgrims mentioned an array of strategies, varying in nature and frequency of use, which are employed to cope with the challenges of the pilgrimage (e.g., waking up early, keeping the pace at the right speed, travelling in a group of pilgrims). Moreover, pilgrims also reported clear efforts to undertake on-going reflection on their performance, providing evidence for the use of metacognitive monitoring strategies (Zimmerman & Paulsen, 1995), which is consistent with the self-regulation model of Zimmerman (2000, 2002). Our findings are consistent with the work by Zimmerman and Cleary (2009), which suggest that robust metacognitive monitoring facilitates the adoption of strategies responsive to ongoing challenges.

Interestingly, reports by participants who were professionally active showed lower metacognitive monitoring efforts than those of the students. Perhaps this is because students, when traveling with schools, are encouraged to carry out monitoring exercises (e.g.,

reports on the activities accomplished) that could have been transferred into this context (e.g., monitoring the outputs of the pilgrimage).

Theme 3: Self-reflection Phase

Finally, participants mentioned efforts made to evaluate their pilgrimage, the last phase of the self-regulatory cycle (Zimmerman, 2002). The major positive aspect highlighted by the participants was the relevant role of the group in helping them walk the Saint James Way and attain their final goal. Participants assessed the instrumentality of walking in a group as a task strategy and reported satisfaction with the positive impact that being in a group had on their individual performance along the journey. This finding is consistent with the literature, which states that being enrolled in a group (e.g., sharing interests, values, and emotions, and setting common goals) is likely to influence and foster the completion of the task (Fredricks *et al.*, 2004). Moreover, the 'pilgrimage community' is said to provide solidarity, shelter, and a feeling of brotherhood among pilgrims; it plays a supportive role in the experience (Damari & Mansfeld, 2016; Havard, 2018).

Participants also mentioned the importance of their preparation to overcome hardships during their journey, which reflects the influence of the forethought phase in the subsequent phases of the self-regulatory process (e.g., Zimmerman, 2000, 2002). Furthermore, participants revealed having learned social, spiritual, and physical skills of various natures, helpful to attaining their goals throughout the journey. For example, skills related to improving the quality of interpersonal relationships, self-discovery, and the ability to persist on a long walk, respectively. Globally, the pilgrims' belief in their ability to make further progress and to achieve goals was likely to increase their sense of efficacy and motivation to progress on the journey, and even encourage them to repeat the experience (Schunk, 1991). In fact, the majority of participants have made the pilgrimage more than once.

Moreover, most of the participants admitted having changed as a person as a result of their self-reflection process. This finding is consistent not only with the self-regulation model (e.g., Zimmerman, 2000, 2002), but

also with previous research indicating that self-evaluative moments may have a powerful effect on activities highly valued by individuals: 'such journeys, like the Camino ... subtly change the person who makes them' (Slavin, 2003:14), and pilgrims are 'motivated to undergo an experience which will add more meaning to their lives' (Collins-Kreiner, 2010:446). Interestingly, participants also stressed the personal and agentic roles at play, mentioning metacognitive efforts made to elaborate on their dissatisfaction (e.g., back pain, walking wet in a rain shower) while changing discomfort into a positive learning experience.

Taken all together, current findings globally corroborate the idea of 'Will' and 'Skill' as two sides of the same self-regulation coin (Weinstein *et al.*, 2011). Initial interest and value of walking the Saint James Way informed pilgrims' choices towards their goal (e.g., the different types of preparation), while metacognitive competences activated through the journey (e.g., monitoring time spent walking) informed pilgrims on their progress. Both self-regulation processes helped participants attain their goal (McCombs and Marzano, 1990).

Another topic of interest that draws attention is the number of students undertaking the journey of the Saint James Way. Twenty-five percent of the participants were students, and all of them were enrolled in a pilgrimage organised by their school. Although this is anecdotal evidence and in need of further confirmation, we were informed by the managers of hostels for pilgrims that the number of pilgrimages organised by schools during the vacation breaks is growing. Some schools provide opportunities for students to develop autonomy and personal skills while going about a demanding journey (Bernay, 2019; Havard, 2017). Teachers and school administrators could consider working on self-regulation strategies in class to further promote the transfer of this strategic knowledge to the challenges which students are likely to face on the Saint James Way, and vice versa, promote the transfer of the lessons learned along the Way to their school work and life-related goals. This could be an interesting new avenue for research.

Limitations and Implications of Research

As in any study, some limitations should be acknowledged. Some information relating to the participants' walking experience was not gathered, such as their motivations (e.g., fulfil a promise, experience as a tourist), the starting point of every participant, walking distance per day, or the time of the year they had travelled. As we learned from this study, there is a great heterogeneity of these participants' attributes. Future studies with a higher number of participants per attribute may consider these aspects to explore new patterns of data. Moreover, interesting dimensions highlighted by our participants, such as perseverance in the whole experience, altruism, and transfer of lessons learned throughout the journey to other aspects of daily life, could also merit researchers' attention for future studies. For example, we did not gather information on the participants' perceived usefulness of contemplating their pilgrimage experiences; these data would have helped strengthen findings on the self-reflection phase. Future research could consider investigating this angle of the pilgrims' experience. Finally, accompanying pilgrims from the starting point and studying data patterns of those who drop out and of those who complete the journey might provide additional valuable insight for research.

Practical Implications

Regarding practical implications, pilgrimage organisers may consider focusing not only on the important role of the whole logistical issue (forethought phase) but also on dimensions that may be less obvious to first-timers, such as self-monitoring. This aspect was identified by a pilgrim mentioned previously:

If we keep walking at this pace, today I can do it, but tomorrow I will not be able to keep walking at this fast pace. I'm not able to maintain this fast-moving pace for a long time, I have to follow a comfortable gait speed (P11).

In fact, the performance phase should not be limited to physically walking the Way.

Pilgrims' awareness of these topics can be promoted through information delivered by pamphlets, short videos or meetings with expert pilgrims aimed to highlight pilgrims' active role during the journey. The self-regulated

cycle (i.e., forethought, performance, and evaluation) is a relevant tool likely to help pilgrims improve the quality of the experience and reach their final goal.

Conclusions

The current study helps to deepen our understanding of the three phases that comprise the pilgrimage of Saint James Way, while providing new avenues for research. Furthermore, findings stressed the importance for pilgrims of planning and self-monitoring their journey. Individuals walking alone and pilgrimage organisers may consider using these data findings to improve pilgrims' overall experiences. Hopefully, this study might help to improve the quality of pilgrimage and its impact on pilgrims' lives.

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