

"I Walk Because...": Exploring College Students' Experiences with Walking as Daily Physical Activity

Gerome Abrajano¹, Rodrigo M. Agustin², Jay Cabanilla³, Victorino L. Rosina⁴, Alma C. Tomenez⁵,
Rhea Jhenia M. Valles⁶, Marjorie A. Viernes⁷

Central Luzon State University

Abstract: Walking is a fundamental yet underrecognized form of physical activity that shapes daily student life on campus. This study explores undergraduate students' motivations, meaningful experiences, well-being impacts, encountered challenges, and recommended improvements regarding walking within a university setting. Qualitative insights revealed three overarching domains: (a) motivations and meaningful experiences. Walking serves as a source of social connection, appreciation of nature and campus beauty, and spontaneous memorable moments; (b) physical and emotional well-being. Walking functions as regular exercise, supports physical fitness, reduces stress, and refreshes mental and emotional energy; and (c) barriers and recommendations. Challenges include rain, flooding, poor pathways, heat, traffic safety concerns, and distance, while suggested improvements focus on better sidewalks, enhanced drainage systems, covered walkways, and safety infrastructure. These findings confirm that walking is valued not only as practical transportation but as an accessible, health-promoting, and enjoyable daily activity. Targeted campus improvements can significantly enhance safety, comfort, and participation, fostering a more walkable and supportive environment for student health and well-being.

Keywords: campus walking · student physical activity · well-being · walking barriers · campus infrastructure

1. Introduction

Walking is one of the simplest and most accessible forms of physical activity that contributes to the physical, mental, and overall well-being of individuals. Regular walking has been associated with improved cardiovascular health, weight management, reduced risk of chronic diseases, and enhanced quality of life (Rebar et al., 2016). The World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) recommends that adults engage in at least 150–300 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity each week, which can be achieved through activities such as brisk walking. Because walking requires no specialized equipment and can easily be incorporated into daily routines, it is recognized as an effective and sustainable way of maintaining an active lifestyle.

College students regularly engage in walking as they move between classrooms, dormitories, libraries, cafeterias, and other campus facilities. For many students, walking serves not only as a means of transportation but also as an important source of daily physical activity. However, the university years are also characterized by increasing academic demands, busy schedules, and sedentary behaviors, which may reduce students' participation in physical activity (Abilleira-González, 2019). Martin et al. (2016) likewise found that motivation and perceived physical competence are associated with physical activity participation among Filipino college students, suggesting that personal factors may influence students' engagement in everyday

physical activity. Understanding how college students experience walking in their everyday lives is important in promoting healthier lifestyles within the university setting.

Despite the accessibility and health benefits of walking, previous studies have shown that many college students do not achieve the recommended level of daily physical activity due to several barriers. Martin and Santos (2015) identified lack of time, foot discomfort, and environmental factors as common barriers influencing students' walking behavior. Similarly, Sun et al. (2015) reported that personal, social, and environmental factors significantly affect students' willingness to walk. On the other hand, studies have also found that supportive campus environments and personal motivation encourage students to incorporate walking into their daily routines (Martin et al., 2016).

Although previous studies have examined the benefits, barriers, and determinants of walking among college students, most have relied on quantitative approaches focusing on physical activity levels, step counts, and behavioral predictors (Sun et al., 2015; Martin & Santos, 2015). Similarly, Martin et al. (2016) examined motivation and physical activity participation among Filipino college students, but there remains limited qualitative research exploring students' personal experiences and meanings attached to walking as part of their daily routines. As a result, limited research has explored how college students personally experience walking in their everyday lives, particularly in the Philippine university context. There is still a need to understand the meanings students attach to walking, the motivations that encourage them, and the challenges they encounter as part of their daily routines.

In response to this gap, the present study explores the lived experiences of College students at Central Luzon State University regarding walking as a form of daily physical activity. Specifically, the study seeks to describe how students experience walking in their everyday lives, identify the factors that encourage or discourage walking on campus, and explore how universities can promote walking as part of a healthy and active lifestyle. The findings of this study may provide valuable insights for developing campus programs and initiatives that encourage regular walking and support students' overall health and well-being.

2. Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore and understand the lived experiences of college students regarding walking as part of their daily physical activity. Phenomenology focuses on understanding and describing individuals' lived experiences to uncover the meaning of a particular phenomenon (Cypress, 2018). This approach was chosen to gain a deeper understanding of students' perceptions, motivations, and challenges related to walking in their everyday lives.

Participants

The participants of this study consist of 14 students enrolled at Central Luzon State University who regularly engage in walking as part of their daily routine. The sample includes seven (7) male students and seven (7) female students. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique that identifies individuals with relevant experiences related to the phenomenon being studied. Eligible participants were at least 18 years old, currently enrolled in a state university in Central Luzon, regularly engage in walking, and willing to voluntarily participate in the study.

Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured individual interviews using an interview guide with open-ended questions based on the research objectives. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided informed consent before the interviews. With their permission, all interviews were audio-recorded and lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes. The recordings were then transcribed verbatim for data analysis.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Interview transcripts were read repeatedly to familiarize the researchers with the data, after which significant statements were identified and coded. Similar codes were grouped into categories and organized into themes and subthemes that represent the participants' lived experiences, perceptions, motivations, and challenges regarding walking as a form of daily physical activity.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers ensured that ethical principles are observed throughout the study. Participation will be voluntary, and all participants will provide informed consent before the interviews. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and their right to refuse participation or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. To protect the participants' privacy, all information gathered will be treated with strict confidentiality. Personal identities will not be disclosed in any report or publication. Instead, pseudonyms or participant codes (e.g., P1, P2) will be used during transcription and presentation of findings. All interview recordings and transcripts will be securely stored and will only be accessible to the researchers. The collected data were used solely for academic purposes related to this study.

3. Result and Discussion

Motivations for Walking

Theme 1: Cost Savings as a Major Motivation for Walking

The participants commonly described saving money as one of the main reasons why they choose to walk. For students, walking provides a way to reduce transportation expenses, especially when their destination is within or near the campus. Several participants explained that instead of spending their allowance on transportation, they prefer to walk whenever possible.

"What motivates me to walk here on campus is simply to save money and also, it's good exercise too." P3

"What motivates me is to save money because when I go home, I also usually walk. I am already used to walking, so when my parents give me allowance, I can still have some money left." P9

"Instead of paying for transportation, I can simply walk. So, the benefits are not only physical but also financial." P12

These responses show that walking is not only viewed as a physical activity but also as a practical way of managing daily expenses. For college students with limited allowances, walking becomes a simple choice that allows them to save money while remaining physically active. This finding is supported by a systematic review which identified financial costs as one of the factors that may discourage university students from engaging in physical activity. When walking is free and accessible, it may provide a practical alternative to transportation or paid forms of exercise (Huang et al., 2022).

Theme 2: Walking as Exercise and Daily Physical Activity

Another common motivation identified among the participants was the physical activity and exercise gained from walking. Several students viewed walking as an easy way to remain active without needing special equipment or a specific workout schedule.

"Since walking is already related to cardio exercise, I also consider walking as part of my cardio workout." P7

"Aside from being able to save money, as a Physical Education major, I would naturally prefer walking rather than using any form of transportation because it is also a way for me to exercise." P10

"Actually, from Fisheries to the barracks is quite far, and there's really nothing much in Fisheries. But I chose to walk because it helps me save money and at the same time, it serves as exercise." P14

The responses indicate that students recognize walking as a convenient form of physical activity that can be included in their everyday routines. Walking allows students to remain active while performing an ordinary daily activity. This finding is consistent with research showing that university campuses can provide opportunities for active transportation and physical activity through walking. Peachey and Baller (2015) found

that campus environmental characteristics were associated with students' active transportation and overall physical activity.

Theme 3: Convenience and Enjoyment of the Campus Environment

Some participants were motivated to walk because it was convenient and allowed them to enjoy the natural surroundings of CLSU. Students mentioned that short distances between destinations, trees, shade, and the overall campus atmosphere made walking more pleasant.

"I choose to walk because the university is just near my boarding house, and it is also a good form of exercise." P4

"Plus, it's lovely to walk in the morning! The atmosphere is so nice, and as a freshman, I just really want to take in and enjoy the whole vibe here at CLSU." P6

"Our campus is well-ventilated, unlike other campuses that feel hot and polluted. The natural environment here is calming, and walking allows me to enjoy it." P13

These statements suggest that students do not view walking only as a means of transportation or exercise. The convenience of nearby destinations and the pleasant campus environment also make walking an enjoyable experience. This finding is supported by Peachey and Baller (2015), who found that environmental characteristics such as land-use diversity and aesthetics were associated with physical activity among college students.

Meaningful Walking Experiences

Theme 1: Walking Creates Memorable Experiences with Friends

For some participants, meaningful walking experiences were connected to spending time with friends. Walking around campus allowed students to interact, share experiences, and create memories together. Unexpected situations during walking also became memorable because they were experienced as a group.

"One time, my friends and I were walking together when it suddenly started raining! We all ran quickly toward the canteen to take shelter." P1

"I shared the same experience—the sudden rain and running to the canteen, plus our friend slipping." P2

"During my freshman year, I often walked with my friends. Sometimes it was dark, and we would joke around while walking." P13

The responses show that walking can provide opportunities for social interaction beyond simply reaching a destination. Walking with friends allows students to communicate, spend time together, and develop memorable experiences. This social dimension is important because research on university students has identified social influences as one of the factors affecting physical activity participation (Huang et al., 2022).

Theme 2: Nature and Campus Environment Make Walking Meaningful

Another meaningful aspect of walking was the opportunity to observe and appreciate the natural environment of CLSU. Participants described the trees, plants, fresh surroundings, and peaceful atmosphere as things they noticed while walking.

"Every time I walk around, I get to see and appreciate the beautiful scenery and nature here at CLSU. That is always meaningful to me." P4

"The nature looked so beautiful. It was really peaceful to watch." P5

"One thing that makes walking enjoyable is when the weather is nice, especially when the sun is out. There are many trees around here, so while walking, you can really appreciate the beauty and essence of nature." P12

These responses indicate that walking gives students time to notice and appreciate their surroundings. The natural environment becomes part of their walking experience and contributes to feelings of peace and enjoyment. Previous research on campus environments has also shown that aesthetics and environmental characteristics can influence physical activity and walking behavior among college students (Peachey & Baller, 2015).

Theme 3: Unexpected Experiences Make Walking Memorable

Several participants remembered unexpected events that happened while walking around campus. These included getting caught in the rain, encountering unusual situations, and experiencing moments that were both frightening and funny.

"One time, I was in the Agriculture area holding a piece of wood. Suddenly, it moved—and I realized it was actually a snake. That moment really stuck with me because it was so unexpected and unforgettable." P14

"I remember one time when the lights kept flickering on and off, and it scared us. That moment was unforgettable because it felt both funny and frightening." P13

These experiences show that walking exposes students to different situations and surroundings that may not be noticed when using transportation. Although some experiences were unexpected or uncomfortable, they became memorable parts of the participants' college experiences. This supports the idea that walking within a university environment can provide opportunities for students to experience and interact more closely with their surroundings (King et al., 2020).

Physical and Emotional Well-being

Theme 1: Walking Supports Physical Fitness and Health

The participants commonly recognized walking as beneficial to their physical health and fitness. They described walking as a form of exercise that helps them stay active and physically prepared for other activities.

"Physically, my body gets used to moving more, and I feel more energetic throughout the day." P1

"Of course, as a BPED student, I need to be physically fit, not just mentally but physically as well. For me, walking helps because, of course, I get exercise, and it also helps me stay physically fit." P11

"Physically, walking helps me stay fit, which is important for ROTC since we need to be physically prepared." P14

The responses indicate that students recognize walking as a simple but useful form of physical activity. For the participants, walking contributes to staying active and maintaining physical fitness, especially when they do not have enough time for structured exercise. King et al. (2020) similarly noted that walking can serve as an important form of physical activity within university settings and can help students incorporate movement into their school-day routines.

Theme 2: Walking Helps Reduce Stress and Promotes Emotional Well-being

Aside from physical benefits, participants frequently described walking as relaxing and helpful for their emotional and mental well-being. Walking gave them time to think, reflect, and temporarily distance themselves from academic or personal stress.

"Emotionally, walking gives me quiet time to think and reflect on things." P1

"Walking gives my mind a chance to rest and sort things out." P2

"Walking feels more refreshing because it gives me time to think and reflect. It is also relaxing because I have time to evaluate myself and express my thoughts while walking." P12

"The surroundings become a stress reliever for me, which is why I enjoy walking." P10

These statements show that walking provides students with a simple way to relax and clear their minds. The activity allows them to have personal time while moving around the campus. Research involving college students has also examined the relationship between walking behavior, the built environment, and physical and mental states, supporting the importance of walking environments in students' well-being (Yang et al., 2022).

Theme 3: Walking Increases Energy and Refreshes Students

Some participants specifically described feeling more energetic, refreshed, and lighter after walking. The activity was viewed as a way to become active while avoiding the feeling of being overly exhausted from more intense forms of exercise.

"Physically, my body gets used to moving more, and I feel more energetic throughout the day." P1

"Same for me physically—I feel healthier and more energetic." P2

"Physically, walking is not too tiring compared to running or biking. It helps me recover and stay active without exhausting myself." P13

These responses suggest that walking can be a manageable form of physical activity for students. It allows them to remain active while fitting naturally into their daily activities. A recent systematic review of university students' physical activity experiences also reported positive outcomes related to physical health, increased energy, and mental well-being among students who participated in physical activity (Huang et al., 2022).

Challenges in Walking Around Campus

Theme 1: Rain, Flooding, and Uncomfortable Pathways

Weather conditions, particularly rain and flooding, were among the common challenges reported by the participants. Rain can make roads wet and pathways muddy, while flooding can make certain areas difficult and uncomfortable to pass.

"For me, the biggest challenge is the weather. Especially when it rains unexpectedly and we don't have umbrellas—we end up rushing to find shelter and getting wet anyway!" P2

"Since it is currently the rainy season, the paths can sometimes become muddy. The muddy pathways can make walking difficult and uncomfortable." P8

"When it rains, there are floods and the roads become wet." P10

The responses show that weather and pathway conditions can discourage or make walking more difficult. Although students are willing to walk, heavy rain, muddy roads, and flooding can affect their comfort and ability to continue walking. Dunton and Schneider (2006) found that situational barriers can influence walking for physical activity among college students.

Theme 2: Traffic and Road Safety Concerns

Another major challenge was the presence of fast-moving vehicles and unsafe road crossings. Participants expressed concern about cars, tricycles, and other vehicles passing close to pedestrians, particularly when roads are wet or crowded.

"I guess it's the heat, and sometimes I also find it hard to cross the road, things like that." P6

"One challenge is crossing the road with fast vehicles. As walkers, we really need to be extra careful because cars move quickly, and it can be dangerous." P13

"Most of the time, it's when it rains. Cars drive too fast and splash water from the flood. Sometimes, vehicles speed by so close that I almost get hit." P14

These statements indicate that safety is an important concern for students who walk around campus. Fast vehicles and difficult road crossings can make walking less comfortable and may discourage students from walking. King et al. (2020) identified motor vehicle traffic as a perceived barrier to students' sense of safety on university walking routes, highlighting the importance of safety in creating a walkable campus.

Theme 3: Distance, Heat, and Crowding Affect Walking Convenience

Some participants identified long distances, heat, and crowded areas as additional challenges. Since some campus buildings are far from one another, walking may take longer and become difficult when students are in a hurry or when many people and vehicles are present.

"The buildings are really far apart from each other, which is a big challenge." P3

"One challenge is during dismissal time because there are a lot of people, and there are also many vehicles, which makes walking difficult." P7

"When you walk to a place, it naturally takes longer to reach your destination. Walking can be tiring, especially when your destination is far." P12

The responses show that walking is affected not only by weather and safety but also by time and distance. Students who are late for class or need to travel between distant buildings may prefer transportation instead. A systematic review of physical activity among university students found that lack of time and accessibility were among the commonly reported barriers to physical activity participation (Huang et al., 2022).

Suggested Improvements for Walking

Theme 1: Improved Sidewalks and Pathways Encourage Walking

The participants strongly emphasized the need for improved sidewalks and pathways around the campus. They suggested smoother, cleaner, and more accessible walking areas to make walking more comfortable and safer.

"I think the walkways and paths need to be fixed and improved. Right now, whenever it rains, puddles form everywhere, making it really difficult to walk without stepping in water. Smoother, better paths would make a huge difference!" P1

"I really appreciate the sidewalk that was built here. Before, there wasn't any sidewalk at all. We used to walk right by the roadside. Having this proper walkway now makes me much more willing and comfortable to walk around campus." P3

"I think the sidewalks need to be improved. That's all." P7

The responses suggest that the condition and availability of sidewalks directly affect students' willingness to walk. Proper walking paths can provide students with a safer and more comfortable alternative to walking beside roads. King et al. (2020) emphasized that sidewalks, crosswalks, accessibility, and other infrastructure are important components of campus walkability and can be used to improve the campus environment for physical activity.

Theme 2: Better Drainage and Flood Control Are Needed

Flooding was another major concern identified by the participants. Students suggested improving drainage systems and reducing flooding because floodwater often covers the areas they use for walking.

"That's it—a better drainage system and proper sidewalks. That's all." P5

"I think the current issue is flooding. Whenever it rains, it becomes difficult to walk around CL because many roads become flooded." P12

"For me, what we need to change here is the flooding. I think we should get rid of the flooding because it's really difficult to pass through." P11

These responses indicate that improving drainage and flood control may make walking more accessible, especially during the rainy season. Even when sidewalks are available, flooding can prevent students from using them. Research on campus walkability emphasizes that the physical condition, accessibility, and safety of walking routes are important environmental factors in supporting walking and physical activity (King et al., 2020; Peachey & Baller, 2015).

Theme 3: Covered Walkways and Safety Features Can Improve Walking Conditions

Some participants recommended covered walkways, shelters, barriers, warning signs, and other safety features. These improvements were suggested to protect students from rain, heat, slippery pathways, and unsafe road conditions.

"I hope we could have more covered walkways or small shelters along the paths. That way, if it suddenly rains or gets too hot while we're far from a building, there's always a nearby shelter where we can rest and wait comfortably." P2

"The sidewalks also lack barriers on the sides, making them unsafe. There are even holes without warning signs, which could cause accidents." P13

"I hope the pathways, especially the sidewalks near Agriculture, can be improved. During rainy season, they get very slippery and flooded, which makes walking difficult and unsafe." P14

These responses show that students want a campus environment where walking is not only possible but also safe and comfortable under different weather conditions. Covered walkways, barriers, warning signs, and maintained paths can help address environmental and safety concerns. This is consistent with research emphasizing infrastructure, safety, accessibility, and environmental support as important elements of campus walkability (King et al., 2020).

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that walking is a meaningful and beneficial form of daily physical activity among college students at Central Luzon State University. The participants' experiences revealed that they are motivated to

walk because it helps them save money, stay physically active, enjoy the campus environment, and spend meaningful time with friends. Walking was also perceived to contribute to physical fitness, increased energy, stress reduction, relaxation, and emotional well-being. However, challenges such as rain, flooding, heat, muddy and slippery pathways, traffic, unsafe road crossings, long distances, and crowded areas may discourage students from walking. Overall, the findings show that walking is not only a practical means of transportation but also an important part of students' physical, emotional, and social experiences. A safe, accessible, and supportive campus environment can therefore play an important role in encouraging students to walk regularly and maintain a healthy and active lifestyle.

5. Recommendation

Based on the findings, it is recommended that Central Luzon State University improve and maintain sidewalks and pedestrian pathways, strengthen drainage and flood-control systems, and provide covered walkways, shaded areas, proper lighting, warning signs, barriers, and safe pedestrian crossings to address the challenges experienced by students. The university may also promote walking through wellness programs, walking campaigns, and other activities that encourage students to incorporate walking into their daily routines. Preserving the campus's natural and pleasant environment is likewise encouraged, as students identified it as an important factor that makes walking enjoyable and meaningful. Finally, future researchers may conduct similar studies involving a larger and more diverse group of students or use quantitative and mixed-method approaches to further examine walking frequency, physical activity levels, and the relationship between walking and students' overall well-being.

6. References

1. Abilleira-González, M., Fernández-Villarino, M. A., Varela-Casal, C., Arufe-Giráldez, V., Silva-Piñeiro, R., & González-González, S. G. (2019). Physical activity intervention program through walking routes in sedentary university students. *Journal of Human Sport and Exercise*, 14(2), 411–424. <https://doi.org/10.14198/jhse.2019.142.13>.
2. Cypress, B. (2018). Qualitative research methods: A phenomenological focus. *Dimensions of Critical Care Nursing*, 37(6), 302–309. <https://doi.org/10.1097/DCC.0000000000000322>.
3. Department of Health. (2026). *DOH shares tips for making exercise a lifelong habit*. Philippine Information Agency. <https://pia.gov.ph>.
4. Dunton, G. F., & Schneider, M. (2006). Perceived barriers to walking for physical activity. *Preventing Chronic Disease*, 3(4), A116. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1779280/>.
5. Huang, T., et al. (2022). Barriers to high school and university students' physical activity: A systematic review. *PLOS ONE*, 17(4), e0265913. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0265913>.
6. King, S. B., Kaczynski, A. T., Knight Wilt, J., & Stowe, E. W. (2020). Walkability 101: A multi-method assessment of the walkability at a university campus. *SAGE Open*, 10(2), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244020917954>.
7. Martin, J. T., Tubera, J. G., Monta, V. D., Naguiat, E. S., Yambao, M. J. C., Tullao, M., Mendoza, J. J. N., Santos, M. E., & Baligad, R. A. (2016). Motivation and physical activity participation of Filipino college students. *Asia Life Sciences*, 25(1), 245–254.
8. Martin, J. T., & Santos, M. E. (2015). Perceived barriers to walking activity of college students. *Asia Life Sciences*, 24(1), 207–217. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292391834_Perceived_barriers_to_walking_activity_of_college_students.
9. Peachey, A. A., & Baller, S. L. (2015). Perceived built environment characteristics of on-campus and off-campus neighborhoods associated with physical activity of college students. *Journal of American College Health*, 63(5), 337–342. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2015.1015027>.

10. Rebar, A., et al. (2016). Intention–behavior gap is wider for walking and moderate physical activity than for vigorous physical activity in university students. *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsams.2014.11.392>.
11. Sun, G., Acheampong, R. A., Lin, H., & Pun, V. C. (2015). Understanding walking behavior among university students using Theory of Planned Behavior. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 12(11). <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4661869/>.
12. World Health Organization. (2020). *WHO guidelines on physical activity and sedentary behaviour*. World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240015128>.
13. Yang, Y., et al. (2022). Associations among perceived built environment, attitudes, walking behavior, and physical and mental state of college students during COVID-19. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8983486/>.

INFO

Corresponding Author: Alma C. Tomenez, Central Luzon State University.

How to cite/reference this article: Gerome Abrajano, Rodrigo M. Agustin, Jay Cabanilla, Victorino L. Rosina, Alma C. Tomenez, Rhea Jhenia M. Valles, Marjorie A. Viernes, "I Walk Because...": Exploring College Students' Experiences with Walking as Daily Physical Activity, *Asian. Jour. Social. Scie. Mgmt. Tech.* 2026; 8(5): 152-160.