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SeRUN® study: Development of running profiles using a mixed methods analysis

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Aim: The study aims to determine profiles of urban runners based on socio-demographic, health, motivational, training characteristics and running-related beliefs and behaviors.

Method: Mixed, exploratory, sequential study with two stages: Quantitative, using an online survey and Qualitative, using semi-structured interviews with runners from the previous stage. Participants were recruited via running routes commonly attended by runners, eight races, previous databases and social media networks. The survey collected information on six dimensions: Socio-demographic, health, motivations, training characteristics, running-related behavior and beliefs and perceptions about health. Profiles were identified using a two-step hierarchical clustering analysis. Subsequently, 15 interviews were conducted with participating runners across each of the identified profiles. Qualitative analysis complemented the profiles characterization, explaining motivations to start and continue running, beliefs about risk factors and injury prevention, and the physical therapist's role in rehabilitation. Statistical analysis from stage one was conducted using SPSS 22 with a confidence level of 5%. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic and content analyses.

Results & Conclusion: A total of 821 surveys were analyzed (46% female), mean aged 36.6±10.0 years. Cluster analysis delineated four profiles (n=752) according to years of running experience, weekly running volume and hours of weekly training. Profiles were named Beginner (n=163) Basic (n=164) Middle (n=160) and Advanced (n=265). Profiles were statistically different according to sex, age, years of running experience, training characteristics, previous injuries and use of technological devices (p<0.05). There were identified motivations to start and continue running. Beliefs about risk factors vary among stretching, footwear, training surface and overload. Runners identified the physical therapist as a specialist, involved in the rehabilitation process and showing empathy towards the patient. These findings might need to be considered when developing preventive and educational strategies for running injuries.

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