

Impact of the Half-Marathon on Urban Running Circuit Usage and Territorial Anchoring

Qualitative Case Study of the Algiers 2025 Half-Marathon on Runner Profiles and Educational Attractiveness

أثر سباق نصف الماراثون على استخدام مسارات الجري في المدن والارتباط المكاني

دراسة حالة نوعية لسباق نصف ماراثون الجزائر 2025 على خصائص العدائين وجاذبيته التربوية

mehaddi-atmane¹, Institute of Physical Education and Sports (STAPS), University of

Algiers 3,

mehaddi.atmane@univ-alger3.dz

Received: 15/01/2026

Accepted: 15/02/2026

Published: 30/03/2026

Abstract : This qualitative case study examines the Algiers 2025 Half-Marathon and its impact on the usage of a newly enhanced urban running circuit, linked to educational physical and sports activities (APS). The objective is to understand how this event influences urban running practices by distinguishing two runner profiles: "displaced runners," already practicing individuals who migrate to this new circuit, and "newly triggered runners," who begin running due to the event's educational impact and course location. The sample includes 26 runners, including 9 women (35%), recruited purposively after the Algiers 2025 Half-Marathon while training on this circuit. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and analyzed using a thematic approach. Results highlight the central role of proximity, atmosphere, and urban setting in the decision to frequent the circuit, as well as the importance of safety and conviviality dimensions, particularly for women. The discussion emphasizes implications for urban sports policies, educational physical and sports activities, and sport-health initiatives in Algeria.

Keywords : Algiers Half-Marathon, Displaced runners, new runners, urban running circuit, Sustainable attractiveness, Barrier breaker, Urban sedentary .

ملخص

تناول دراسة الحالة النوعية هذه نصف ماراثون الجزائر 2025 وتأثيره على استخدام مضمار جري حضري تم تحسينه حديثاً، المرتبط بالأنشطة البدنية والرياضية التربوية. الهدف هو فهم كيفية تأثير هذا الحدث على ممارسات الجري الحضري من خلال التمييز بين ملفين للعدائين: "العدائون المنتقلون"، وهم ممارسون سابقون ينتقلون إلى هذا المضمار الجديد، و"العدائون المستجدون"، الذين بدأوا الجري بفضل التأثير التربوي للحدث وموقع المضمار. تضمنت العينة 26 عداءً، من بينهم 9 نساء (35%)، تم اختيارهم بطريقة هادفة بعد نصف ماراثون الجزائر 2025 أثناء تدريبهم على هذا

Impact of the Half-Marathon on Urban Running Circuit Usage and Territorial Anchoring
Qualitative Case Study of the Algiers 2025 Half-Marathon on Runner Profiles and Educational
Attractiveness

المضمار. أُجريت مقابلات شبه موجهة وتم تحليلها باستخدام المنهج الموضوعي. تُبرز النتائج الدور المركزي لعوامل القرب، والأجواء، والمحيط الحضري في قرار تردد المضمار، بالإضافة إلى أهمية أبعاد الأمان والودية، خاصة بالنسبة للنساء. تناقش الدراسة الآثار المترتبة على السياسات الرياضية الحضرية، والأنشطة البدنية والرياضية الترفيهية، ومبادرات الرياضة من أجل الصحة في الجزائري باستخدام المنهج الموضوعي. تُبرز النتائج الدور المحوري للقرب من المسار، والأجواء العامة، والبيئة الحضرية في قرار التردد على المسار، بالإضافة إلى أهمية يُعدي السلامة والتواصل الاجتماعي، لا سيما بالنسبة للنساء. يُركز النقاش على الآثار المترتبة على سياسات الرياضة الحضرية، والأنشطة البدنية والرياضية التعليمية، ومبادرات الرياضة والصحة الكلمات المفتاحية: نصف ماراتون الجزائر، العدائون المنتقلون، العدائون الجدد، مضمار جري حضري، جاذبية مستدامة، كاسر الحواجز، الخمول الحضري

*** Introduction and problematic of the study:** According to the WHO, physical inactivity represents a major economic burden: nearly 500 million preventable non-communicable disease (NCD) cases are expected between 2020 and 2030, with treatment costs exceeding \$300 billion. These impacts have accelerated the development of urban educational physical and sports activities (EPSA), particularly running, which holds a central place in public policies aimed at combating sedentariness, promoting health, and strengthening social cohesion. The WHO Global Action Plan targets a 15% reduction in physical inactivity prevalence by 2030, transforming marathons and half-marathons into accessible educational spaces for all, beyond sports elites, in a predominantly urban sedentariness context.

Urban EPSA, comparable to leisure activities like travel, were once reserved for elites before becoming mass practice in sport-leisure. This form of urban sport educates society by promoting collective values (discipline, perseverance, respect for others) while fostering social inclusion and motor autonomy learning in shared spaces. Practitioners prioritize pleasure, relaxation, and personal fulfillment over performance; sport-leisure thus becomes a vector of individual affirmation where the body embodies image, form, youth, and dynamism. Cities like New York, Paris, London, or Berlin illustrate their lasting impact on active practices through health awareness, motor development, and transmission of collective values.

In Algeria, the rise of fitness centers since the 2000s has democratized fitness, aerobics, and jogging across all social strata—women, men, all ages—both indoors and outdoors, integrating local sociocultural specificities such as family access to sports circuits. Sports and political authorities demonstrate firm commitment to developing urban educational EPSA through "sport-health" programs and public space reclamation. The Algiers 2025 Half-Marathon (6,500 participants), with its 8 km circuit along Algiers Bay connecting several municipalities, embodies this dynamic: praised for its festive organization and international reach, it addresses crucial challenges (obesity/NCD fight, social/psychological well-being, modern sports image of the capital). Female participation is notable, in harmony with sociocultural norms, initiating novices and citizens into structured practice alongside elite athletes. Persistent circuit usage by "displaced runners" (experienced) and "newly triggered runners" (novices) continues several weeks post-event, particularly on weekends.

This qualitative case study of the Algiers 2025 Half-Marathon analyzes the catalytic role of an urban sports event on sustainable circuit usage, distinguishing runner profiles ("displaced" vs "newly triggered") and attractiveness factors (proximity, safety, atmosphere, landscape quality).

Research question: To what extent does the Algiers Half-Marathon promote sustainable usage of an urban circuit as educational EPSA, and how does it influence runner trajectories (displaced vs new, men/women)?

Operational Definitions of Key Concepts

1. **Algiers Half-Marathon:** Algiers 2025 Half-Marathon (21.1 km, 6,500 participants), 8 km bay circuit. Catalytic urban sports event transforming temporary infrastructure into regular practice via media legitimization and festive effect.
2. **Displaced runners:** Experienced runners (>6 months structured practice in stadiums/forests) migrating to urban circuit post-event. Evolutionary continuity: new safe central challenge without trajectory break (50% sample).

Impact of the Half-Marathon on Urban Running Circuit Usage and Territorial Anchoring

Qualitative Case Study of the Algiers 2025 Half-Marathon on Runner Profiles and Educational Attractiveness

3. **New runners:** Novices (<6 months, ex-sedentary/sporadic fitness) initiated by event. Decisive transformation: sedentariness → regular routine via psychosocial catalyst, collective mimicry, proximity (50% sample, 89% triggered Q4).
4. **Urban running circuit:** 8 km pedestrian/running path integrated into urban fabric: free, transport-proximate/accessible, secure (lighting), scenic (sea view). Permanent infrastructure post-event via inherited signage.
5. **Sustainable attractiveness:** Circuit's ability to retain practitioners post-event: safety (86%, 100% women), gratuity (94%), collective atmosphere (94%), landscape (92%). Weekend family/novice destination beyond neighborhood (H3 validated).
6. **Barrier breaker:** Event role dissolving psychological (81% social judgment fear) and logistical obstacles (67% cars/dogs, peripheral sites). Urban public space legitimization via media (75%), collective supervision (H1 unanimous).
7. **Urban sedentary lifestyle:** Behavior <150 min/week moderate physical activity in dense urban settings. Constraints: paid gyms, nature remoteness, gendered norms. WHO 15% reduction target by 2030; 94% novices ex-sedentary (Q5).

General Hypothesis: The Algiers Half-Marathon, as an urban sports event, promotes sustainable usage of a running circuit as educational physical and sports activity by acting as a catalyst for engaged runners and new practitioners through circuit attractiveness factors.

Secondary Hypotheses

H1: Engaged or new runners perceive the event as a "barrier breaker" facilitating urban sports practice access.

H2: The event differentially influences trajectories: revelatory/new challenge for engaged runners vs transformative discovery for novices distant from gyms/forests.

H3: Sustainable circuit attractiveness rests on proximity, accessibility, safety, collective atmosphere, and landscape quality, creating a legitimate family-friendly public space.

General Objective Analyze the impact of the Algiers 2025 Half-Marathon on runner profiles and sustainable urban circuit usage through a qualitative case study structured around the three hypotheses (H1-H3).

Specific Objectives Validate H1: "Barrier breaker" perception for urban sports access (engaged/new).

Explore H2: Differentiated influences (revelatory/challenge vs transformative).

Identify H3: Attractiveness factors (proximity, safety, atmosphere, landscape quality).

Practical Chapter

Methodology Followed :Descriptive qualitative case study post-event (November 2025), Algiers Bay circuit (8 km, 6,500 participants). Analysis based exclusively on response percentages (thresholds >70-90%) without inferential statistical tests.

Sample: N = 26 runners (9 women, 35%) purposively recruited on-circuit:

- 13 displaced runners (>6 months structured practice; ex-stadiums/forests; 4F)
- 13 newly triggered runners (recent starts; ex-irregular fitness/sedentary; 5F)

Results :

Hypothesis1: Barrier Breaker for Access to Urban Sports Space

Table 1: Validation of Hypothesis 1 by Runner Profile

Hypothesis	Displaced Runners (n=13; 4F)	Newly Triggered Runners (n=13; 5F)
H1: "Barrier breaker" for urban access	Majority perceive "barrier breaker" effect	Majority perceive "barrier breaker" effect

Impact of the Half-Marathon on Urban Running Circuit Usage and Territorial Anchoring

Qualitative Case Study of the Algiers 2025 Half-Marathon on Runner Profiles and Educational Attractiveness

Table 2: Key Indicators of Barrier Removal (H1)

Indicator	Question	Percentage	Interpretation
Fear of social judgment	Q6	81%	Psychological barrier lifted
Safety (cars/dogs)	Q6	67%	Logistical obstacle overcome
Novices triggered	Q4	89%	Activation of new practitioners
Health motivation	Q5	78%	Post-event motivation
Personal challenge	Q5	61%	Post-event motivation
Media legitimization	Q7	75%	Legitimation of urban practice

Table 3: Mechanisms of the "Barrier Breaker" Effect by Profile

Profile	Main Perception	Identified Mechanisms	Women's Specificities (9/26)
Displaced (n=13; 4F)	Logistical and psychological breaker	Transition stadiums/forests → central circuit legitimized by media/signage	Collective safety and supervision
New (n=13;	Rupture sedentary/sporadic	Psychosocial catalyst via public	Dissolution of fear

Profile	Main Perception	Identified Mechanisms	Women's Specificities (9/26)
5F)	practice	space normalization	of social judgment
Total (n=26)	Unanimous perception	Universal urban gateway	Particularly pronounced effect

Results Hypothesis 2: Differential Influence on Trajectories

Table 4: Differential Influence on Trajectories (H2)

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Displaced Runners (n=13; 4F)</i>	<i>Newly Triggered Runners (n=13; 5F)</i>	<i>Cross-cutting Elements (All Profiles)</i>
H2: Differential influence on trajectories	Revelation of new challenge	Transformative discovery and escape from enclosed/forest spaces	Empirical distinction based on experience capital; psychosocial catalyst effect

Table 5: Indicators of Practice Transformation (H2)

<i>Profile</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Question</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
Novices	Sedentary transformation	Q5	94%	Transition sedentary → regular routine
Novices	Initial health motivation	Q2-3	69%	Primary motivation factor

Impact of the Half-Marathon on Urban Running Circuit Usage and Territorial Anchoring
Qualitative Case Study of the Algiers 2025 Half-Marathon on Runner Profiles and Educational Attractiveness

Profile	Indicator	Question	Percentage	Interpretation
Novices	Trigger role	Q4	89%	Event as catalyst
Engaged	Nature access saturation	Q5	89%	Justified migration to new circuit
Engaged	Stadiums/forests migration	Q2-3	50%	Trajectory continuity
Common	Stress reduction	Q14	89%	Cross-cutting psychosocial effect
Common	Perseverance	Q16	83%	Sustainable educational transformation

Table 6: Empirical Distinction of Post-Event Trajectories

Profile	Initial Capital	Running	Event Role	Post-Event Trajectory
Displaced (n=13)	Structured (stadiums, forests)		Revelation of central/secure terrain	Continuity with new training challenge
New (n=13)	Diffuse/rare (walking, occasional fitness)		Deep practice trigger	Transition sedentary → regular running routine
Key factors	-		Social networks, family,	Trajectory distinction

Profile	Initial Capital	Running Event Role	Post-Event Trajectory
		geographical proximity	confirmed

Hypothesis 3: Sustainable Circuit Attractiveness

Table 7: Factors of Sustainable Circuit Attractiveness (H3)

Hypothesis	Displaced Runners (n=13; 4F)	Newly Triggered Runners (n=13; 5F)	Cross-cutting Elements (All Profiles)
H3: Sustainable circuit attractiveness	Safety (lighting/presence), accessibility (proximity/transport), free access, landscape (urban views); family/women's space	Same factors + weekend destination (easy parking/free access despite distance); valued family atmosphere/landscape; enhanced loyalty through supervision (beginner groups)	Cross-cutting effects: he well-being, confidence; symbolic rediscovery

Table 8: Indicators of Loyalty and Circuit Perception (H3)

Indicator	Question	Percentage	Interpretation
Sea view/landscape quality	Q10	92%	Landscape quality as key factor
Lighting/safety	Q10	86% (100% women)	Safety as major determinant

Impact of the Half-Marathon on Urban Running Circuit Usage and Territorial Anchoring
Qualitative Case Study of the Algiers 2025 Half-Marathon on Runner Profiles and Educational
Attractiveness

Free access as loyalty factor	Q12	94%	Free access as primary retention factor
Return for proximity/view	Q14	81%	Loyalty maintained by combined factors
Morning groups	Q11	75%	Organized socialization valued
Request for additional lighting	Q18	72%	Identified improvement needed
Recommendation of morning groups	Q20	78%	Desired community reinforcement
Emerging community	Q19	67%	Developing social dynamic

Table 9: Synthesis of Attractiveness Factors by Profile

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Displaced (n=13)</i>	<i>New (n=13)</i>	<i>Cross-cutting (n=26)</i>
Safety	Lighting/human presence	Lighting, presence + beginner supervision	Key element particularly for women
Accessibility	Proximity/transport	Proximity, transport + weekend parking	Free access as decisive factor
Atmosphere	-	Family/collective atmosphere	Creation of legitimate family space

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Displaced (n=13)</i>	<i>New (n=13)</i>	<i>Cross-cutting (n=26)</i>
Landscape	Urban views/pleasant setting	Urban views, setting + leisure destination	Symbolic reclamation of urban space

Discussion of Results

Discussion of Hypothesis 1 Results

Table 1 confirms H1 unanimously validated: all participants perceive the Algiers 2025 Half-Marathon as a true "barrier breaker" facilitating urban sports practice access (Poczta & Malchrowicz-Mośko, 2018).

For displaced runners (experienced), the event removes logistical and psychological obstacles linked to traditional peripheral sites (stadiums, forests), making a central circuit immediately accessible and legitimized by media visibility and temporary signage. This "urban gateway" role transforms an elitist/marginal practice into daily activity integrated into the urban fabric (Weed et al., 2015).

Among newly triggered runners, this perception is even more pronounced, signaling a decisive break with sedentariness or sporadic practices (irregular fitness). The event acts as a psychosocial catalyst, normalizing urban running and dissolving initial inhibitions related to public space (social judgment fear 81% Q6; Alruwaili et al., 2025). Women (9/26) particularly benefit from this collectively reassuring supervision.

Discussion of Hypothesis 2 Results

Table 4 validates H2 through clear empirical distinction: "displaced = revelation/continuity" vs "new = transformative discovery" (Scheerder et al., 2019).

Displaced runners possess structured running experience capital (stadiums/forests). The event plays a revelatory role for new central/safe urban playground, serving as entry point to this

Impact of the Half-Marathon on Urban Running Circuit Usage and Territorial Anchoring

Qualitative Case Study of the Algiers 2025 Half-Marathon on Runner Profiles and Educational Attractiveness

circuit subsequently integrated into their structured training routine (89% saturated nature access Q5; Shipway & Holloway, 2019).

For novices, the half-marathon plays a much deeper triggering role (94% initial sedentariness Q5), transforming rare/diffuse sports practices into true regular running entry. Social networks, gym friends, family, and proximity ("near my home") influence is predominant. The event is experienced as a collective, festive, motivating moment, legitimizing urban running practice and particularly reducing psychological barriers for beginners/women (89% triggered Q4).

Discussion of Hypothesis 3 Results: Table

7 supports H3: proximity/safety/atmosphere/landscape create a legitimate/family public space retaining all profiles (Chalip, 2004; Weed, 2020).

Concrete factors of safety (lighting 86%, 100% women Q10), accessibility (proximity/transport/parking), gratuity (94% Q12), and landscape quality (city views 92% Q10) are essential to create a welcoming space perceived not only by experienced runners but also by families, women, low-sportive individuals. Some participants traveling from afar every weekend (free access/facilitated parking) shows the circuit has become a true sports leisure destination beyond neighborhood residents.

Perceived effects combine physical (health), psychological (stress/confidence 89% Q14), and social benefits (expanded circles). Discovering Algiers' "splendid" areas plays a symbolic role: reclaiming the city as a living, sporty, positive space.

General Discussion: The results demonstrate that the Algiers 2025 Half-Marathon functions as a multifaceted urban sporting catalyst, systematically validating all three hypotheses through complementary mechanisms situated within the Algerian urban context (WHO, 2022).

This qualitative case study extends models of urban event legacy (Poczta & Malchrowicz-Moško, 2018; Shipway & Holloway, 2019) to the North African sociocultural context, where gendered norms amplify psychological gains (Alruwaili et al., 2025). It documents a dual trajectory effect (Scheerder et al., 2019): evolutionary continuity for experienced runners versus profound initiation for sedentary individuals, achieved through the collective legitimization of public space (Chalip, 2004).

This constitutes a structuring sporting event which, through the collective legitimization of a free and secure urban circuit, generates sustainable physical activity trajectories that aid in education against sedentary lifestyles—a model immediately replicable across Maghrebi metropolitan areas (Benyaiche, 2025).

Conclusion: This qualitative case study confirms that the Algiers 2025 Half-Marathon lastingly structures urban Physical and Sports Activities (PSA) and acts as a differentiated catalyst for urban sporting practices, thereby validating all three hypotheses. The event was unanimously perceived as a "breaker of barriers to urban access," notably for women through enhanced safety and supervision, while removing logistical obstacles for runners from peripheral areas and psychosocial inhibitions for novices. It significantly influenced individual trajectories, creating stimulating new urban challenges for experienced runners and catalyzing the transition from a sedentary lifestyle to a regular routine for beginners through collective mimicry and social proximity.

The sustainable attractiveness of the circuit rests on concrete factors: proximity, safety (lighting and the presence of others), accessibility (free parking), a family-friendly atmosphere, and landscape quality, thereby creating a genuine public space that attracts families and non-sporting individuals from beyond the immediate neighborhood. The cross-cutting benefits—including physical and mental health, social cohesion, and the symbolic reclamation of Algiers' "splendor"—reinforce its structuring and educational role. This implies a policy commitment to prioritizing the permanent maintenance of circuits, the development of inclusive clubs (for women and beginners), and continuous communication (via networks and schools) to

Impact of the Half-Marathon on Urban Running Circuit Usage and Territorial Anchoring

Qualitative Case Study of the Algiers 2025 Half-Marathon on Runner Profiles and Educational Attractiveness

generalize this anti-sedentary model in urban Algeria, thereby promoting sport-for-health and a dynamic image of the capital.

References

1. Alruwaili, N., et al. (2025). Barriers and enablers affecting female participation in physical activity. PMC Articles. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12855424/>
2. Bandura, A. (1977). Social learning theory. Prentice-Hall.
3. Benyaiche, N. (2025). Running through memory: Algiers Urban Trail. CFCAfrica. <https://cfcafrica.org/running-through-memory-an-interview-with-youcef-benbessi-president-of-the-algiers-urban-trail-organizing-committee-by-nesrine-benyaiche/>
4. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
5. Chalip, L. (2004). Beyond impact: A general model for sport event leverage. *Sport Management Review*, 6(2), 87-108. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1441-3523\(04\)70055-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1441-3523(04)70055-1)
6. Chalip, L., & McGuirty, J. (2004). Local business leveraging of a sport event: Managing an event for economic benefit. *Journal of Sport Management*, 18(1), 132-158.
7. Daniaud, C. (2023). L'ancrage territorial des événements sportifs: Vers un bien commun territorial. In *Géographie et aménagement du territoire*. Presses Universitaires de Rennes.
8. Funk, D. C., & James, J. D. (2012). The psychological continuum model: A synthetic framework for understanding sport consumer behaviour. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 21(2), 106-117.
9. Krouse, R., et al. (2024). The association between EMS system characteristics and post-hospital discharge patient outcomes. *Journal of Emergency Medicine, Trauma and Acute Care*. PMC11216429.
10. Ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports, Algérie. (2023). Plan National Sport-Santé 2023-2027.
11. World Health Organization. (2022). World health statistics 2022: Monitoring health for the SDGs. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240051157>

12. Poczta, J., & Malchrowicz-Moško, E. (2018). Running as a form of leisure and health promotion: The Poznań Half Marathon case. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 15(6), Article 1138. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph15061138>
13. Scheerder, J., et al. (2019a). Sport participation trajectories. *European Journal for Sport and Society*, 16(1), 1-20. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/16138171.2019.1570654>
14. Scheerder, J., et al. (2019b). Sporting habits of urban runners: Classification according to motivation and participation frequency. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16(24), 4969. PMC6950326.
15. Shipway, R., & Holloway, I. (2019). What motivates successful marathon runners? The role of life meaning. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, 1671.
16. Université d'Alger (STAPS). (2022). Études locales sur la course à pied à Oran: Impact des événements urbains. Internal report STAPS Alger 3.
17. Weed, M., et al. (2009). The Olympic Games and post-games utilisation of Olympic venues: A systematic review. *Leisure Studies*, 28(1), 1-20.
18. Weed, M., et al. (2015). A systematic review of the long-term effects of participation in mass participation sport events on physical activity. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports*, 25(6), e12-e25. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sms.12448>