Reviewer's report

Title: Participation and performance trends of East-African runners in Swiss marathons and half-marathons between 2000 and 2010

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Reviewer: Hannes Gatterer

Reviewer's report:


Although the manuscript is well written and research questions are clearly defined, the question with respect to the importance of these findings arises. Within their limitation section, authors state that explanatory measures are missing. The reviewer shows highest respect given the extensive work the authors performed so far, which is documented by numerous publications, but also urgently recommends adding explanatory measures to their research.

Major Compulsory Revisions

The authors listed all marathons and half marathons in table 1 (does the list embraces all competitions?). Apparently, in some specific competitions, no African runners took part in, which might need some discussion. Marathon and half-marathon performance, beside others, depends on the course profile; could this be related to the no performance differences between African and non-African runners? What about Alpine marathons?

Page 3, line 11: Referring to Leyk et al., authors state that finishing a marathon is possibly “only after a few trainings”. What exactly is meant by “a few trainings”? Do the authors refer to training years or do they really belief everyone can finish a marathon after only 1 or 2 weeks of training? If so, I would severely challenge such a statement!

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

competing interests: none