

## Article

# Research Trends in Sports Volunteering: A Focus on Polish Contributions to Global Knowledge

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**Abstract:** Recent years have witnessed a growing academic interest in sports volunteering, recognizing its critical role in the effective organization and sustainability of sporting events. This study aims to systematically review the scope and outcomes of research conducted by Polish scholars on sports volunteering, accessible to an international audience. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses guidelines were used to structure the assessment. The analysis covers studies published between 2014 and 2022, evaluating their contributions to the understanding of volunteer motivation, event management, and the integration of sustainability practices within the context of sports events. The findings not only provide insights into the current state of research on sports volunteering in Poland but also highlight potential future research directions, particularly concerning the sustainability of volunteer engagement in sports event management.

**Keywords:** volunteering; sport; motivation; research; Poland

## 1. Introduction

In times dominated by career pursuits, consumerism, and the desire to earn as much money as possible, it is becoming increasingly common for people to seek breaks, and—in various ways and situations—devote their time to others, without any regard to private gain. One such activity form is volunteering. Academic literature offers a multitude of volunteering definitions [1]; however, most generally, it can be understood as a form of work based on selfless and voluntary performance of specific tasks as well as involvement in various socially useful activities [2]. Volunteerism enables the development of interests and certain soft competencies and strengthens the motivation for self-education and self-realisation. It can also be part of the learning process as it involves altruistic behaviours, pro-social attitudes, and even respect for multiculturalism, which is an extremely important learning experience leading to the comprehensive development of society. Thanks to the knowledge acquired through volunteer activities individuals are provided with opportunities to develop skills and acquire a range of useful competencies, not only useful in stimulating instrumental activities directly related to undertaken actions but also in active participation in civil society [3].

It is also essential to consider the broader context of volunteering in terms of leisure time. Volunteering can be seen as an important component of how individuals choose to utilize their free time. This connection between volunteering and leisure time is especially important as it reflects a societal shift toward more purposeful and socially beneficial use of free time, contrasting with purely recreational or passive activities. Understanding how individuals integrate volunteer work into their leisure can provide valuable insights into the motivations behind volunteering, particularly in older populations or those seeking meaningful ways to engage with their communities [4,5].

Volunteering is increasingly intertwined with the broader concepts of recreation, green tourism, and sustainability, reflecting a growing awareness of the environmental and social impacts of human activities. Recreational volunteering, which often involves activities



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such as trail maintenance, environmental cleanups, or the organization of eco-friendly events, provides participants with the opportunity to contribute to the preservation and enhancement of natural spaces while enjoying the benefits of outdoor activities. This form of volunteering not only promotes physical well-being but also fosters a deeper connection with nature and encourages sustainable practices. Similarly, green tourism, which emphasizes low-impact and environmentally conscious travel, often relies on volunteers to support conservation efforts, wildlife protection, and community-based tourism initiatives. These activities contribute to the sustainability of local communities by promoting responsible tourism practices that respect both the environment and cultural heritage [6,7]. The integration of volunteering into these areas underscores its role in advancing sustainability goals and highlights the importance of volunteer efforts in fostering a more sustainable and equitable society.

Another crucial point is the historical context of volunteering, especially in post-communist countries such as Poland. During the communist era, volunteering was often state-mandated and lacked the spirit of altruism that characterizes contemporary volunteerism. The coercive nature of volunteer activities in that period may have contributed to a lingering reluctance to engage in volunteer work after the fall of communism, making the resurgence of volunteerism in post-communist societies even more significant. This historical influence on attitudes toward volunteering is an important factor to consider, as it has shaped the contemporary landscape of volunteerism in Poland and other former Eastern Bloc countries [8].

For this reason, volunteers are often referred to as animators (a general term for a role focused on planning and organizing time and various activities) or even leaders [9]. Their role in and contribution to society was recognised by the European Parliament, which declared 2011 the European Year of Volunteering, celebrating the work of millions of volunteers across Europe and encouraging the participation of European citizens in volunteering activities [10]. In the following years, numerous research articles were published, focusing on the phenomenon of volunteering from different perspectives, and representatives of various sciences examined theoretical and practical aspects of volunteer interest factors providing empirical research results [11].

In Poland, sports volunteering is one of the most rapidly growing types of volunteerism, owing to the regular activities of non-governmental organisations involved in the promotion of sport and recreation [12]. Sports volunteering in Poland usually takes the form of assistance in the preparation and organisation of various sporting events, despite a noticeable nationwide reluctance of school students to take physical education lessons [13], and a decline in the interest in physical activity among the general population [14]. These trends have led to an intensification of the promotion of active lifestyles, not only in the form of active organisation of numerous events for the widest possible range of participants—usually involving sports that are relatively easily accessible and inexpensive, requiring only simple sports clothing, a place to practice, and basic skills [15]—but also through passive participation in sports events as spectators or volunteers [16]. Since sporting events usually last no longer than thirty days, sports volunteering is most often classified as a short-term activity [17]. Sporting events mostly involve volunteers from the host country; however, organisers of large international sporting events also recruit volunteers from all over the world [18]. In Poland, the first sporting event on such a large international scale was the 2012 UEFA European Football Championship for men's national football teams, co-organised with Ukraine, during which, for example, over three match days in Poznan, around one thousand three hundred volunteers worked to ensure the smooth flow of several hundred thousand fans into the Poznan stadium and a specially organised fan zone [19]. In total, more than five and a half thousand volunteers worked during the UEFA Euro 2012, selected from among more than 24,000 applicants, 43% of which came from Poland [20]. Since then, there has been a strong increase in interest in volunteering at football-related events, as evidenced by the establishment of the official 'Vol-

unteering Programme of the Polish Football Association' with more than seven thousand registered volunteers [21].

However, it should be noted that sports volunteers not only become involved in the area of sport in the broadest sense of the term, i.e., organisation of competitions, festivals, picnics, or other events aimed at popularising physical activity and sport, but also often act on behalf of other organisations, for example, related to vocational training or health care. The different nature of volunteer involvement is most often due to volunteers' individual motivations to act for particular purposes. According to the research by Angosto et al., studies on motivations and future intentions in sports event volunteering are most frequently conducted by researchers from the United States and Australia, followed closely by Brazil, Canada, Korea, and China [22]. Significant events that have been subject to research include major sporting events such as the 2002 FIFA World Cup held in South Korea and Japan, as well as the 2002 Asian Games [23], 2012 NFL Super Bowl [24], 2015 Australian PGA Championship and the 2016 Gold Coast Airport Marathon and 2016 Cycle Queensland 2016 [25], and the Olympic Games and 2016 Paralympic Games [26]. In Poland, research on motivation and motives for undertaking sports volunteering has been carried out using diagnostic survey methodology and questionnaires, only on the basis of original, non-adapted, scales, and concepts. One such study was carried out on a group of 120 volunteers at the 2013 European Junior Swimming Championships organised in Poznan. Out of the eleven examined volunteer motivations meeting new people (19%), interesting leisure activities (18%), and new experiences (18%) were most frequently indicated. Making new friends (19.3%) was considered to be the most positive effect of volunteering in volunteers' daily lives, while respondents who had been already involved in sports volunteering earlier demonstrated significantly higher levels of willingness to help others (9.30% vs. 3.80%) and contacts with professionals (7.60% vs. 1.10%) than volunteers new to their roles [27]. In a study of 50 volunteers at the Cavaliada equestrian event organised in December 2012 in Poznan, the most important volunteer motivations included the desire to learn something new (34%), desire to integrate with other people (26%), and desire to develop a passion for horse riding (14%). Volunteers also stressed positive sensations and emotions when undertaking volunteering activities, i.e., joy (38%), excitement (18%), admiration (18%), and aesthetic experiences (10%) [18]. A questionnaire survey at the 39th World Mountain Running Championships held in 2013 in Krynica-Zdroj was carried out among 14 volunteers, who indicated that the most important motivation factors for them were packages for volunteers (57.1%) and event type with regard to sports discipline (35.7%) [28]. In contrast, 81 volunteers taking part in an online survey, not specifying any particular sporting event, indicated observing a sporting event and athletes up close (80%) and making new friends with people with a shared passion for sport (78%) as their most important motivations for participation [29]. Motivational determinants of different styles of involvement by sports volunteers were also assessed in a study of 326 participants of the two official UEFA Euro 2012 volunteering programmes. The analysis showed that needs for stimulation (27%), professional development (24.5%), and interesting leisure activities (22.7%) were the most common underlying motivations of the respondents. Interestingly, the study also included an analysis of the diversity of respondents' community service experience, which showed that most volunteers worked for one (37%) or two (35%) types of institutions, respectively [30]. All the above studies demonstrate that the motivations of sports volunteers depend on many factors.

It must be emphasised that sports event volunteering is a type of extremely important support from the point of view of event organisers. Volunteers' enthusiasm, commitment, and unpaid activities bring tangible benefits such as saving funds that can be then used for the development of a particular sport or a sports club. Nevertheless, the costs associated with training volunteers and difficulties in managing their work, e.g., in achieving the expected work quality, should not be overlooked [31]. Deadlines related to the recruitment of volunteers or organisation of a sports event—which may exclude certain groups of people from volunteering (e.g., college students who have their exam sessions in winter and

summer)—or logistical issues related to getting volunteers from their places of residence to the event venue can also be problematic [28].

The above considerations regarding the specifics of sports volunteering have been based on sources available only in the Polish language, since the vast majority of relevant Polish authors have been published in Polish-language journals. The English-language output of Polish scholars is somewhat different due to their adopted internationalist approach and drive to internationalise research. For this reason, the aim of this article was to review the academic output of Polish researchers in the field of sports volunteering available to the international community.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. Methodology

The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses methodology, which is used to analyse published systematic reviews covering a given topic area, was used in the study. In recent years, the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses have become one of the most frequently cited reporting guidelines in health sciences and physical culture sciences [32,33]. It has been applied in accordance with the most up-to-date publicly available Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses principles [34].

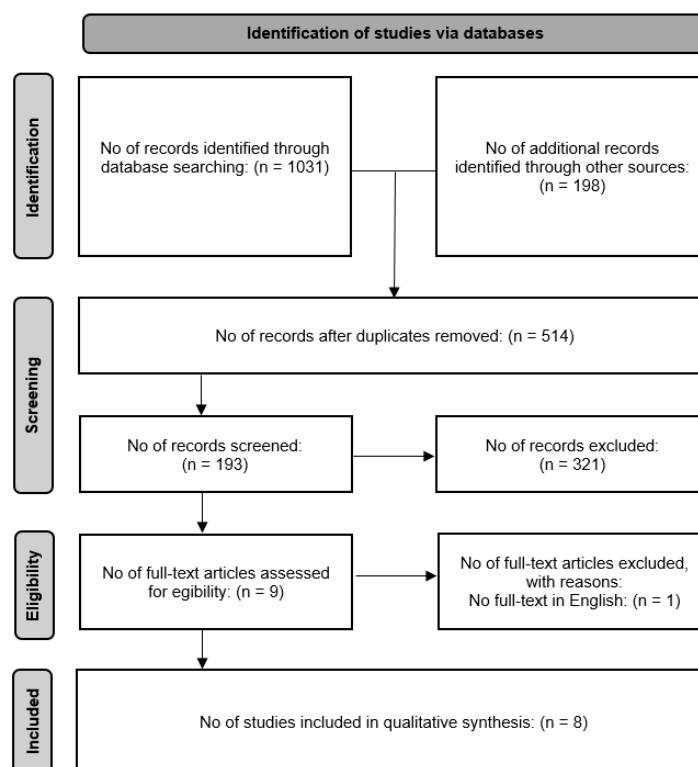
### 2.2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Full-text English-language articles by Polish researchers published in peer-reviewed journals, excluding dissertations and abstracts, were used in the analysis. Databases from grey literature, including evaluation reports, annual reports, articles in non-peer-reviewed journals and other publishing channels were excluded. The articles were selected in two stages. The first stage involved sorting the articles according to the following inclusion criteria: (1) articles in scientific journals; (2) articles in English; (3) articles containing the words sport/sports and volunteer/volunteers/volunteering in their titles; and (4) articles by authors affiliated with a Polish university. The exclusion criteria in the first stage were (1) conference proceedings, chapters in books, books, or other types of publications; (2) posters, reviews, or scientific reports; (3) articles in languages other than English; and (4) reproduced articles. The second stage involved a qualitative analysis of the selected articles aimed to demonstrate Poles' international achievements in the field of sports volunteering as well as shortcomings and further potential research directions.

### 2.3. Search Strategy

A combination of searches for articles containing the terms sport/sports and volunteer/volunteers/volunteering was used in the analysis. Different electronic databases, including SPORTDiscus, Scopus, Web of Science Core Collection, SPOLIT (BISp), Academic Search Ultimate, Medline, ERIC, MasterFILE Premier, Health Source: Nursing/Academic Edition, Wiley Online Library, and the Polish Scientific Bibliography database (PBN) were chosen to provide the most comprehensive coverage of research areas addressed in the study.

The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses 2020 checklist was used to identify eligible articles. The search was conducted from April to June 2023. The author independently checked all search results using inclusion and exclusion criteria—and to avoid confusion—performed the analysis using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses tool twice [35]. The analysis revealed the same results both times, confirming the reliability of the findings. The process of identification of relevant studies in the databases was as follows in Figure 1:



**Figure 1.** Author’s own diagram based on the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses model [35].

### 3. Results

The objective of this article was to evaluate the academic contributions of Polish researchers in the area of sports volunteering and make these findings accessible to the global scholarly community. Using qualitative analysis of the results, the article presents an organized overview of the scope of research, methodology quality assessment, field and journal analysis, and categories of keywords.

#### 3.1. Scope of Research

A total of eight studies published between 2014 and 2022 passed all the selection stages. The studies were conducted by 14 Polish researchers from 6 different sports universities in Poland. Most of the authors were affiliated with the Józef Piłsudski University of Physical Education in Warsaw and the Poznan University of Physical Education (two of eight, 25% each). The Table 1 below lists the identified articles:

**Table 1.** Overview of Research Studies—Characteristics of Studies and Authors.

N°	Year	Author(s)	Journal	Title of Article/DOI	Affiliation	Number of Citations *
1.	2014	Halemba P., Kucharski M.	<i>Polish Journal of Management Studies</i>	Sports volunteering as an element which gives advantage with employment in organisations operating in the field of sport and recreation [36]  DOI: not available.	Academy of Physical Education in Katowice	0
2.	2015	Brdak M.	<i>Journal of Education, Health and Sport</i>	Media image of sport volunteering during the UEFA Euro 2012™ and the motives for social work and its style of volunteers working in Poznan and in Poland [37]  DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.35693	Poznan University of Physical Education	1

Table 1. Cont.

N°	Year	Author(s)	Journal	Title of Article/DOI	Affiliation	Number of Citations *
3.	2018	Krajňáková E., Šimkus A., Pilinkiene V., Grabowska M.	<i>Journal of International Studies</i>	Analysis of barriers in sports volunteering [38] DOI: 10.12775/QS.2015.002	Wroclaw University of Economics and Business	18
4.	2018	Śliwak J., Zarzycka B. i Partyka J.	<i>The Person and the Challenges</i>	Motivation for assistance activities among hospice, missionary and sport volunteers [39] DOI: 10.15633/pch.2427	The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin	5
5.	2020	Nagel S., Seippel Ø., Breuer C., Feiler S., Elmose-Østerlund K., Llopis-Goig R., Nichols G., Perényi S., Piątkowska M., Scheerde J.	<i>International Review for the Sociology of Sport</i>	Volunteer satisfaction in sports clubs: A multilevel analysis in 10 European countries [40] DOI: 10.1177/1012690219880419	Józef Piłsudski University of Physical Education in Warsaw	32
6.	2020	Escher, I., Brzustewicz, P.	<i>Journal of Physical Education and Sport</i>	Sport in corporate volunteer programs. A case study of companies operating in Poland [41] DOI: 10.7752/jpes.2020.s2158	Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń	0
7.	2021	Bańbuła J.	<i>Physical Culture and Sport. Studies and Research</i>	Motives for Participating in sports events volunteering in Poland [42] DOI: 10.2478/pcssr-2021-0025	Józef Piłsudski University of Physical Education in Warsaw	9
8.	2021	Rozmiarek M., Poczta J., Malchrowicz-Moško E.	<i>Sustainability</i>	Motivations of sports volunteers at the 2023 European Games in Poland [43] DOI: 10.3390/su13116406	Poznan University of Physical Education	26

\* from Google Scholar, status as of 12 September 2024.

### 3.2. Methodology Quality Assessment

Among the eight studies included in this review, three received 15 points or higher out of a possible total of 20 points, and two came within the range of 10–15 points. The remaining articles scored less than 10 points. The results show that the majority of studies are at a good or very good quality level, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Quality Assessment of Methodology in Reviewed Studies.

Item N°	Section/Topic and Checklist Item	Publication N° (Table 1)							
		1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
<u>Title and Abstract</u>									
1a.	Identification of the type of study in the title	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2b.	Structured summary of objectives, methods, results, and discussion	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<u>Introduction</u>									
Background and Objectives									
2a.	Scientific background and explanation of rationale	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2b.	Specific objectives or hypotheses	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<u>Methods</u>									
Participants									
3a.	Eligibility criteria for participants	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1

Table 2. Cont.

Item N°	Section/Topic and Checklist Item	Publication N° (Table 1)							
3b.	Settings and locations of data collection	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
3c.	A table showing baseline demographic characteristics	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
	Sample Size								
4a.	Sample size determined	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
4b.	When applicable, explanation of how the sample size has been determined	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
	Procedure								
5.	The procedure has sufficient details to allow replication, including how and when they were actually administered	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1
	Instruments or Tools								
6a.	Completely defined pre-specified primary and secondary outcome measures, including how and when they were assessed	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1
6b.	Use of validity and reliability tools	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1
	Implementation								
7.	Who made each part of study (or was the sole author of the study)	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Statistical Methods								
8a.	Statistical methods used to analyse results	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1
8b.	Use of methods for additional analyses to attain the study objective	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Results								
	Outcomes and Estimation								
9.	A table or figure showing outputs of analysis more relevant to the study	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1
	Discussion								
	Interpretation								
10.	Interpretation consistent with results, balancing advantages and disadvantages, and considering other relevant evidence	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Limitations								
11.	Study limitations addressing sources of potential bias or imprecisions	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1
	Practical Implication								
12.	Main applicability of study results	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
	Other Information								
	Funding								
13.	Sources of funding and other support, role of funders (or information about no financial support)	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
	TOTAL	5	7	10	12	18	7	17	18

### 3.3. Field and Journal Analysis

As regards the type of publication the Table 3 below indicates that the surveyed studies were published in eight different journals representing several research areas. The highest number of publications was in journals from the area of sport (62.5%), followed by management (12.5%), sustainable development (12.5%), and theology (12.5%).

**Table 3.** Analysis of Publication Fields and Journals for Reviewed Studies.

Field	Journal	N	JCR (2022) Category & Journal Quartiles	JCI (2022)
Sport (5)	<i>Journal of Physical Education and Sport</i>	1	N/A	0.00
	<i>Studies in Sport Humanities</i>	1	N/A	0.00
	<i>Journal of Education, Health and Sport</i>	1	N/A	0.00
	<i>International Review for the Sociology of Sport</i>	1	Sociology—SSCI (Q2); Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism—SSCI (Q3)	1.18
	<i>Physical Culture and Sport. Studies and Research</i>	1	Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism—ESCI (N/A)	0.20
Management (1)	<i>Polish Journal of Management Studies</i>	1	Management—ESCI (N/A)	0.44
Sustainable development (1)	<i>Sustainability</i>	1	Environmental Sciences—SCIE (Q2); Environmental Studies—SSCI (Q2); Green & Sustainable Science & Technology—SCIE (Q3); Green & Sustainable Science & Technology—SSCI (Q4)	0.64
Theology (1)	<i>The Person and the Challenges</i>	1	N/A	0.00

### 3.4. Categories of Keywords

A total of 40 keywords were assigned to the eight articles and grouped into specific categories for clearer presentation, as presented in Table 4:

**Table 4.** Classification of Keywords for Reviewed Studies.

Category	Keywords
Sport and Volunteering (23)	Volunteering (×6), Sport (×2), Sport volunteer management, Sports volunteers, Sports volunteering experience, Corporate volunteering, Sport in corporate volunteering, Corporate volunteers, Volunteer, Sports clubs, Sport activities, Sports sector, Volunteer motivations, Volunteer satisfaction, Sports events, Sports and leisure operators, Leisure
General Psychological Factors (6)	Motive, Motivation, Motivations, Endo-exocentrism, Values, Pro-social behaviour
Defined Events (3)	Olympic Games, 2023 European Games, UEFA Euro 2012™
Market (3)	Unemployment, Labour market, Employment
Scales (2)	OVMS, VFI (Volunteer Functions Inventory)
Others (3)	Actor-theory concepts, Multilevel approach, Barriers

As expected, the leading theme of the articles was Sport and Volunteering, with keywords related to this category accounting for 57.5% of all words. The remaining keywords could be classified into groups of General Psychological Factors (15%), Defined Events (7.5%), Market (7.5%), and Scales (5%). Three keywords, with no connection to each other, were included in the Others group. It should be added, however, that some keywords fitted into two or more categories; however, their direct association with sport and volunteering was regarded as more important and they were therefore assigned to the Sport and Volunteering category.

To summarize the results, an examination of eight studies, conducted by 14 Polish researchers across six sports universities, revealed that the majority of the authors were associated with Universities from Warsaw and Poznan. The overall quality of the studies was commendable. These studies were disseminated across eight distinct journals, with the predominant focus being on the sports domain. Furthermore, a total of forty keywords were assigned to these studies and categorized for enhanced clarity.



#### 4. Discussion

The aim of this study was to conduct an outcomes of research to identify articles by Polish researchers in the field of sports volunteering published in English and thus being available to international researchers. Such research reviews provide a comprehensive overview of the scientific output on specific topics. Sports event volunteering has already been subject to a few similar analyses, including reviews of 71 original peer-reviewed scientific articles published in English-language journals on the topic of volunteer management at events [44], 33 original peer-reviewed scientific articles published in English-language journals on sports volunteer motivation [45], and 30 studies on the motivations and future intentions to participate in sports event volunteering regarded as a key factor in the success of events [22]. The present review supplements these analyses by focusing, however, not on aspects related to sports organisation and management, but on the body of international work carried out by researchers from a specific country, i.e., Poland, often overlooked in the academic discourse despite the fact that there has been an increase in the number of publications from Poland on sports volunteering in recent years. The study results were summarized in the form of (1) a list of publications by Polish authors and their affiliations, journal titles, and DOIs; (2) methodological quality assessment; (3) journal field of studies; and (4) all keywords grouped into specific categories.

Eight studies published between 2014 and 2022 successfully completed all stages of selection. These studies were carried out by 14 researchers from 6 distinct sports universities in Poland. The majority of the authors were affiliated with the Józef Piłsudski University of Physical Education in Warsaw and the Poznan University of Physical Education, with each institution accounting for 25% of the studies. The analysis showed that the authors of the articles addressed a variety of sports volunteering issues. Halemba and Kucharski [36] investigated volunteers' experience gained during their work in the context of job search in sports and leisure organisations. Their results indicated that employers looked favourably on working with volunteers, although prospective rewards and promotions were not linked to volunteering but dependent on the reliable performance of professional duties. Escher and Brzustewicz [37] focused on associations between volunteering and work and analysed three companies operating in Poland with regard to employee volunteering projects. Their study revealed that the companies' employees' love of sporting activities can be an argument for including physical activity in employee volunteering programmes and thus implementing it in projects aimed at solving real social or environmental problems. Krajňáková et al. [38] explored the barriers to involvement in volunteering in the sports sector and noted that the predominant problems included inadequate preparation for volunteering in sports organisations, volunteers' age, inadequate recognition of volunteers, and lack of information. A study by Nagel et al. [39] was in turn based on a review of volunteers' satisfaction with their activities and showed that the most important determinants included recognition, support, leadership, material incentives, and volunteer workload.

A dominant theme in the reviewed studies was the different perspectives related to volunteer motivations. Śliwak et al. [40] analysed motivations to engage in helping others in individuals involved in different forms of volunteering. Their results indicated significant differences between hospice, mission, and sports volunteers in terms of tradition, hedonism, success, self-direction, stimulation, power, and universalism. Brdak [41] compared the community involvement style with the motivations of volunteers working at the European Football Championships in the urban zone and the sports zone. Volunteers working in the sports zone placed a high value on being able to feel the sporting atmosphere, while those working in the urban zone indicated the importance of altruistic motives and the material benefits of volunteering. Importantly, volunteers in the sports zone displayed more enthusiasm for their work, whereas volunteers with more experience chose to work in the urban zone. The latter also perceived the multidimensional benefits of volunteering much more strongly, as confirmed by Rozmiarek et al. [43].

The results further indicated the dominance of the motive of helping others, regardless of experience or gender, among the studied volunteers. Bańbuła [42] found the motives of

value and understanding to be most frequently indicated in questionnaires by sports volunteers. All the study findings, while they may provide valuable information to coordinators for designing volunteering programmes, also carry other practical implications for building an attractive offer for volunteers or implementing various types of good volunteering practices. The research findings indicated that, as anticipated, the majority of the reviewed publications were published in sports journals.

The objects of interest for the Polish researchers were three sporting events: the Olympic Games, UEFA Euro 2012, and 2023 European Games. The first two can be classified as sports mega-events [46]—or following Müller’s definition [47] even XXL or giga-events—and the third as an XL or mega-event. This implies that small-scale events or non-mega-events, understood as events occurring more frequently and mostly in the same place and fulfilling an extremely important tourism role for the cities and regions concerned [48], may be also of future interest for Polish researchers.

As anticipated, the predominant focus of the articles was on sports and volunteering, with related keywords constituting 57.5% of the total. Other keywords were categorized into general psychological factors, defined events, markets, and scales. The group of keywords referring to scales measuring the motivation of sports volunteers showed that only the OVMS designed to assess the motivation of volunteers at multi-sport events within the Olympic tradition has been used so far [49] as well as the VFI scale used in various studies on the motivation of volunteers in the area of human services [50]. It can be thus concluded that Polish researchers have not yet employed any event- or sport-specific scale that could be effectively used to measure the motivation of volunteers at various types of international sports events of different scopes. There is a Polish version of the SMS; however, it is addressed to athletes, not volunteers [51]. It is therefore necessary to adapt appropriate scales, e.g., VMS-ISE [52], MTV [53], and SEVMS [54] to Polish conditions as Polish researchers have so far only studied pilot groups of volunteers using non-adapted tools in terms of their repeatability and reliability.

The Methodological Quality Assessment performed in this study showed a very good level in three of the eight identified publications. Moreover, the results indicate that most of the studies are of good or very good quality. However, due to the fact that Nagel et al. [41] did not measure motivation, but satisfaction, and moreover dealt with volunteers in sports clubs from ten countries (not just Poland), it is not possible to compare it with other studies with a strictly Polish-centric approach. Therefore, any verification of the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents in motivation surveys can only be carried out on the basis of the other two publications. Both found that women were more often involved in sports volunteering in Poland, which is also corroborated by Krajňáková et al. [40], and which is also a trend confirmed in other countries [23,24,26,55–59]. In addition, the vast majority of volunteers in the Polish studies were in their late teens, especially college students in their twenties, i.e., an age group dominant also in some global studies [60,61], while the international studies indicate that the vast majority of sport event volunteers are 45 years old or older and in employment [62–64]. The above-mentioned analyses show that an interesting research issue from a Polish perspective is the verification process of sports volunteers, especially of the male gender, as well as underage, middle-aged, or senior volunteers with a secondary or higher education, and who worked professionally. Future research topics could also include motivations of sports volunteers in the context of their existing family, friendships, or romantic relationships [65]; social capital and ethnicity [66]; earned income [67]; or the current or past work roles related to volunteer work [68].

## 5. Study Limitations

The study has some limitations. Firstly, the analysis using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses tool was carried out by a single author. Although it was performed twice and yielded the same results, the participation of an additional researcher in the analysis could further strengthen its credibility. Secondly, the reviewed articles do not provide management implications for practitioners and constitute

mostly a theoretical basis for sport volunteering researchers. Thirdly, access to databases and full-text articles is limited since many Polish journals are not indexed in the main databases and relevant research in non-indexed journals may be overlooked. For this reason, the PBN database was also used to fill the gap in the number of articles from non-indexed journals. However, some studies may be missing from the PBN as well. Finally, the proposed methodology may leave out other English-language articles by Polish researchers in the field of sports volunteering that did not fulfil at least one of the conditions at certain stages of the analysis and were thus excluded from the pool of selected articles. For example, the analysis revealed two particularly important articles in the field of sports volunteering, one of which contained a reference to sport only in the abstract and keywords but not in the title [69], and the other only referred to volunteering at a sports event in the main text [70]. Poorly defined titles can cause problems in finding articles by readers interested in the topic.

## 6. Conclusions

A review of 8 studies published between 2014 and 2022 by 14 Polish researchers from 6 sports universities found that most of the authors were affiliated with the Józef Piłsudski University of Physical Education in Warsaw and the Poznan University of Physical Education. The quality of the studies was generally good, with three studies scoring 15 or more points out of 20, and two scoring between 10 and 15 points. The studies were published in eight different journals, primarily in the field of sports (62.5%). Additionally, 40 keywords were assigned to these studies, grouped into specific categories for clarity.

Increasing knowledge on the motivation of sports volunteers and seeking effective instruments to motivate sports volunteers should be research priorities in Poland in the coming years. It is necessary to adapt and validate one of the international scales measuring the motivational determinants of volunteers. Additionally, understanding the role of sustainability in shaping volunteer motivations is crucial, as volunteers increasingly engage in activities that contribute not only to sports events but also to environmental and social sustainability. Future research should explore how sustainability-related factors influence volunteer engagement and whether the integration of green initiatives within sports events can enhance volunteer satisfaction and participation. It is interesting to examine the motivation of volunteers at international sports events, considering the aspects discussed in the present study and not yet researched in other publications, particularly in relation to the growing importance of sustainable development in the context of global sporting events.

Moreover, this study highlights the broader significance of promoting volunteering and the use of leisure time to support physical activity and various sports-related initiatives. Many countries, including those in the former Eastern bloc, require encouragement to advance these agendas. By fostering an environment that supports volunteering and active leisure, we can enhance community engagement and contribute to the promotion of physical activity on a larger scale. This approach not only benefits individuals but also supports the development of more active and health-conscious societies.

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