

## Article

# Motivations of Sports Volunteers at the 2023 European Games in Poland

Mateusz Rozmiarek , Joanna Poczta  and Ewa Malchrowicz-Moško 

Department of Sports Tourism, Faculty of Physical Culture Sciences, Poznan University of Physical Education, 61-871 Poznan, Poland; jpoczta@awf.poznan.pl (J.P.); malchrowicz@awf.poznan.pl (E.M.-M.)

\* Correspondence: rozmiarek@awf.poznan.pl

**Abstract:** Volunteering is fundamental in the organization of sporting events of any rank, and there is no doubt that without volunteers, the realization of such events would not be possible. The purpose of this study was to investigate relationships between selected socio-demographic factors (gender, age, place of residence, professional activity, and—rarely researched—previous experience in sports volunteering) and the motivation of people who have signed up to be volunteers at the 2023 European Games in Poland. In total, 535 respondents completed the Olympic Volunteer Motivation Scale (OVMS) designed to assess the motivation of volunteers at multi-sport events in the Olympic tradition. A questionnaire survey was conducted among a group of students of the University of Physical Education in Krakow, who had signed up as volunteers via an online form. The respondents were required to provide data on their gender, age, place of residence, professional activities, and sports volunteering experience. The volunteers' motivations did not differ with regard to gender, place of residence, and professional activity; however, significant differences were found with regard to sports volunteering experiences. The scores by respondents with previous experience in sports volunteering were the highest for the Olympic related, egoistic, and purposive scales of the OVMS. The research findings can be used by sports event organizers to improve the effectiveness of volunteer recruitment and management strategies. Understanding the factors that encourage potential candidates to volunteer may also facilitate collaboration with them during future events.

**Keywords:** sport volunteer management; motivation; volunteer motivations; sports volunteers; sports events; sports volunteering experience; 2023 European Games; Olympic Games; OVMS



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## 1. Introduction

The organization of large or mega-sport events is complex and involves a multitude of tasks, including logistics and safety, whose execution often depends on a large number of volunteers [1]. The role of volunteers is commonly recognized as adding the important, social, cultural, political, and economic dimensions to the efficient organization of mega-sport events [2]. Volunteers are an essential component of services delivery and management of sports events, and their involvement produces a number of long-lasting and sustainable positive effects and contributes to the ultimate success of the event [3]. This is especially appreciated by the International Olympic Committee. In 2002, the Committee began to form the concept of legacy, which, along with the concept of the sustainable development of sport, has become an essential part of the Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games and the IOC [4]. Increasingly, the Olympic legacy and practical rules have been formulated within the concept of sustainable development and its consequences related to the sustainable development of sport [5]. Such actions have recently been included in a set of 118 Olympic reforms called the New Norm [6]. The adopted plan focuses on the recommendations of the 2020 Olympic Agenda related to the organization of the Games and includes, among other things, rethinking transport options, reducing the size of the facilities or optimizing the existing infrastructure in order to reuse the fields for various sports disciplines [7]. One of the many ways to implement sustainable development is also

volunteering [8,9]. It is quite important, because sports organizations should recognize the motivations of volunteers at small-, medium-, large-, and mega-sport events to help the organizers to reduce the costs of organizing the tournaments. Volunteers extend public services to the poorest and most marginalized, create new forms of collaboration that lead to social innovation, strengthen local ownership of development processes, and create a pathway to human participation and active citizenship [10]. In their work, volunteers can have a direct contact with the stakeholders or even become the faces of the event [11]. Volunteers spare no time and effort for a wide variety of reasons. One of the most common ways of understanding volunteers' motivation is their will to help others, articulated by theories of altruism and selflessness [12]. The main theoretical basis for this research, however, is the self-determination theory (SDT), which effectively explains the importance of psychological needs for the structure of motivation to act in various spheres of life [13]. According to this theory, the basis of human development is the psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness [14], which are the most important for explaining the motivation of the goal in action [13]. Autonomy is about feeling the source of your actions, experiencing choice and will. Competencies concern the feeling of effectiveness in a competency environment, coping with optimal challenges and effective performance of tasks. Relatedness is about feeling caring, respectful, and connected with others in the social environment [15]. In SDT, it is extremely important to distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The fact that volunteers can be motivated by various factors, internal and external, was recognized by researchers in the 1990s [16,17]. Intrinsic motivation is the freedom to engage in activities that are inherently interesting or enjoyable. Extrinsic motivation, in turn, refers to doing something that leads to a separate outcome. In addition, external motivation may differ to the extent that it is self-determined. Applying the theory to volunteering, the motivation of volunteers to participate in an event may be intrinsically motivated, for example, due to the interest in the event or the joy of helping others. It can also be controlled externally by feeling pressured to volunteer or even get incentives offered in the form of free gadgets or free entry to an event [18]. Although there are only a few studies on SDT in sports volunteers [18–20], SDT provides a suitable framework for understanding the motivation for volunteering at sporting events.

The categorization of the reasons for volunteering varies and depends on the type of event and organization. For this reason, it is reflected in research on the motivation of volunteers, especially volunteers of sports events, who may have different motivations than non-sport volunteers. The most universal approach to developing a volunteer function inventory (VFI) that can be applied to all contexts of volunteer motivation was proposed by Clary et al. [21] who conducted research under six functions: value, understanding, social, career, protection, and empowerment. Researchers found that volunteers with high scores on VFI are likely to continue volunteering. However, the high level of generality of VFI has resulted in the creation of other scales specially designed to study the motivation of volunteers during sports events. Farrell et al. [22] developed a 28 item Special Event Volunteer Motivation Scale (SEVMS) using it in a survey of a group of 300 volunteers who worked at the 1996 Scott Tournament of Hearts Canadian Women's National Curling Championship. The scale contained four factors: purposive, solidary, external traditions, and commitments, and the highest ranking item was found to be "I wanted to help make the event a success". The results showed that volunteers during special events can experience many motivations, and the satisfaction of volunteers with the past experiences is related to meeting their expectations of a well-organized event and gladness with the amenities [22]. Another popular scale is the six-factor Volunteer Motivations Scale for International Sporting Events created by Bang and Chelladurai [23], who at the 2002 FIFA World Cup trial examined the motivations of volunteers in terms of expression of values, patriotism, interpersonal contacts, professional orientation, personal development, and external rewards. Bang and Ross [24] extended this scale by the factor called love for sport, also changing the name of the patriotism factor to social commitment. Researchers investigated whether volunteers would be willing to support the country and the sporting event to make it

a success. While Giannoulakis et al. [25], when creating the Volunteer Motivation Scale (OVMS), indicated three categories: Olympic related, egoistic, and purposive, the research showed that the main factor is Olympic motivation, which can be attributed to the separate nature of the Olympics.

The analysis of numerous studies on volunteer motivation reveals mixed results. Williams et al. [26] examined the motivations of the resident volunteers at the Whistler's Men's World Cup of Skiing and noted that the most important motivation was to foster the image of the community. Motivations such as the opportunity to meet people sharing the same interests or staying outdoors also played a significant role. Materialistic reasons, such as receiving free tickets or souvenirs, turned out to be the least important. Fairley et al. [27] surveyed volunteers at the 2004 Summer Olympics and concluded that there were four main themes for volunteer participation: nostalgia, camaraderie and friendship, Olympic connection, and sharing and acknowledgment of their expertise. These themes distinguished the group of respondents from volunteer tourists for whom altruism, professional development, cultural exchange and learning, travel and adventure, and the structure and people in the organization have been identified as key motives of volunteerism [28]. The research of Koutrou et al. [29] made during the 2012 Summer Olympics confirmed the multi-dimensionality of volunteers' motivation. Love for sport and the Olympics as well as interpersonal contacts seemed to be the most important motivators among the respondents. Moreover, people motivated by the will to establish people-to-people contacts showed an increased awareness of volunteering opportunities and were more likely to continue volunteering in different contexts and thought less about quitting. In turn, Alexander et al. [30] found that younger volunteers were more likely to continue volunteering after their experiences at the Games. Their study also identified significant age effects on 18–24 year olds who showed a wider interest in volunteering as well as an interest in acquiring a sports qualification. One of the most recent studies on volunteer motivation was conducted by Lim and Ibrahim [31] during the 29th Southeast Asian Games in Malaysia 2017, hailed as "Green Games" due to the adoption of the environmental sustainability management program. The volunteers were highly motivated by solidarity—primarily personal growth, followed by purposive reasons, where they indicated primarily relevance to something worthwhile. On the other hand, foreign traditions were indicated as the least motivating factors.

There have been numerous studies on the relationships between sports volunteers' motivation and gender [32–34]. Downward et al. [32] noted that women see volunteering as a challenge and want to redefine their identity, and for men, an existing sport identity and a casual association with sport are important. Skirstad and Hanstad [33] proved that men are more interested in volunteering, and the internal motivation which is their own interest in sport was one of the most important. On the other hand, the latest research presenting the motivations and challenges faced by female volunteers was undertaken by Stride et al. [34]. Researchers have shown that gender influences the experience of volunteers, and women often have to negotiate with the organizers of subsequent events in order to be able to continue volunteering. Age is also an interesting socio-demographic factor for the study [35,36].

However, despite extensive research on volunteering at great sporting events, little is known about volunteers who resided outside the host cities. Chen, Zheng, and Dickson [37] note that there is an underlying assumption that sports volunteers are recruited only from the host community. For this reason, they conducted semi-structured interviews with twelve volunteers, residing in Leicestershire, who worked at the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Their findings suggest that Olympic-related factors and altruistic feelings were central motivations for volunteerism. However, there has been no quantitative research in this area. In addition, very few studies have focused on the motivational factors in sports volunteers from different communities, for example, college students [38–40]. Mirsafian and Mohamadinejad [38] interviewed 304 students from Iranian universities and demonstrated that the social and obligation factors were the highest and the lowest

effective determinants of sport volunteers' motivation, respectively. Johnson et al. [39] surveyed 322 students from five Midwestern institutions of higher education, who indicated love of sport and career as the most important motivating factors behind volunteering. A similar result was found in a study of Generation Z's sustainable volunteering by Cho, Bonn, and Han [40].

Studies on volunteer participation in mega-sport events have been hitherto investigated only in the context of the Olympic Games [27,29,30], although the continental games can present an interesting research subject in this regard.

According to Yeung [41], research into volunteer motivation is important for two reasons: development and continuity of volunteering on both theoretical and practical levels; and future participation and commitment. The present study is an attempt to identify motivational factors of volunteers at a mega-sport event in the Central and Eastern Europe—the 2023 European Games to be held in the city of Krakow, in Poland. The aim of the study is to investigate relationships between selected socio-demographic factors (gender, age, place of residence, professional activity, and—rarely researched—previous experience in sports volunteering) and the motivation of people who have signed up to be volunteers at the 2023 European Games. It is supposed that there is a relationship between age, gender, place of residence, professional activity, or previous experience in volunteering and motivations in sports volunteering; therefore, the following four hypotheses have been adopted in the present study:

**Hypothesis 1.** *Female sports volunteers have different motivations than male sports volunteers.*

**Hypothesis 2.** *Sports volunteers residing in the host city have different motivations than volunteers residing outside the event city.*

**Hypothesis 3.** *Sports volunteers who combine studies with professional work have different motivations than purely studying volunteers.*

**Hypothesis 4.** *Sports volunteers who have had previous experience in volunteering have different motivations than debuting volunteers.*

Knowing the motivations of sport volunteers may be useful from the point of view of the promotion of sports, recreation, volunteerism, and even sports tourism—by knowing somebody's motivations, we could better organize and prepare some events to develop sports tourism. It is assumed that the assessment of differences in motivation levels can be used to improve volunteer recruitment and management strategies at other events.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. Design

The study used the diagnostic survey method and descriptive statistics. Due to the fact that in 2023, an event under the Olympic banner will be held for the first time in the history of Poland (only in the 19th century the Grand Duchy of Posen—one of present-day regions of Poland—hosted primitive athletic competitions called 'pseudo-Olympics' [42]), the authors of this article decided that the best scale for the study would be the Olympic Volunteer Motivation Scale (OVMS)—the only scale containing the Olympic-related dimension.

### 2.2. Participants

The research was carried out on a group of students of the University of Physical Education in Krakow, who had signed up online to work as volunteers during the 2023 European Games. The respondents were assembled through the University Students' Association. The socio-demographic characteristics were as follows (Table 1):

**Table 1.** Participants.

| Socio-Demographic Characteristics        | Volunteers ( <i>n</i> = 535) |         |
|------------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------|
|                                          | <i>n</i>                     | (%)     |
| <i>Gender</i>                            |                              |         |
| Men                                      | 253                          | (47.28) |
| Women                                    | 282                          | (52.72) |
| <i>Age</i>                               |                              |         |
| 18–21                                    | 232                          | (43.37) |
| 22–24                                    | 266                          | (49.72) |
| 25 or more                               | 37                           | (6.91)  |
| <i>Origin from Krakow</i>                |                              |         |
| Yes                                      | 353                          | (65.98) |
| No                                       | 182                          | (34.02) |
| <i>Professionally active</i>             |                              |         |
| Yes                                      | 76                           | (14.21) |
| No                                       | 459                          | (85.79) |
| <i>Experience in sports volunteering</i> |                              |         |
| Yes                                      | 72                           | (13.46) |
| No                                       | 463                          | (86.54) |

Among the respondents who volunteered to help in the European Games in Krakow, women constituted 52.71% and men—47.28%. Over 49% of the respondents were aged 22–24 years. Almost 66% of the respondents came from Krakow. Only 14.20% were professionally active, and only 13.45% had some previous sports volunteering experience.

### 2.3. Research Instruments

OVMS is designed to assess the motivation of volunteers at multi-sport events in the Olympic tradition. Its use makes it possible to verify whether the Olympic issues were important among the volunteers. The study used a 5-point Likert scale for each item, ranging from “Strongly disagree” (1) to “Strongly agree” (5), with higher scores indicating a higher level of compliance with the motivation for volunteering during the games. A three-factor identification model was applied in which the exogenous variables were selected socio-demographic factors, and the endogenous variable was the motivation of people interested in sports volunteering. According to Giannoulakis, Wang, and Gray [23], the predominant factor was labeled Olympic Related and defined as “the desire of volunteers to be associated with the Olympic movement, be involved in the Olympics, or meet with Olympic athletes”. The second factor was labeled egoistic and defined as “the individual’s need for social interaction, interpersonal relationships, and networking”. The third factor was labeled purposive and defined as “the willingness of volunteers to benefit with their actions the stated end of the organization” [25]. The detailed motivations used in the OVMS are presented in Appendix A.

The research instrument was validated in a group of the first 100 people taking part in the study. The obtained results were considered satisfactory, and the questionnaire reliability coefficient was  $\alpha = 0.846$ . Considering the positive results, the study was continued. The questionnaire was prepared in Polish. The translation into Polish was made from the English original. The three authors of the article, two sports psychologists, and an English philologist took care of the translation of the scale. The translations of each of these persons were assigned the following weights: 2, 1, 1, 2, 2, and 3. If the questionnaire item was translated in the same way by all persons, it was accepted. In the case of differences in translation, the version with the highest total weight was selected.

### 2.4. Procedure

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the study group was contacted online. A Google Docs questionnaire survey was open for one month, from 31 December 2020 to 31 January

2021. All respondents received detailed information about the study. All in all, 535 students completed the questionnaire.

The study was conducted in conformity with the Declaration of Helsinki. Participants were treated ethically under the American Psychological Association code of ethics regarding anonymity and responses.

The study did not require formal ethical approval by the responsible entity, because in accordance with the rules in Poland, the Bioethics Committee does not consider applications for standardized surveys, used in accordance with their intended purpose, when the research develops statistically selected elements of the survey.

Our questionnaire did not require the completion of a separate participant information sheet or consent form but clearly indicated that all questionnaire takers give informed consent to the study. Respondents were informed about the course and character of the survey. The survey was voluntary and confidential.

### 2.5. Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics are presented as means and standard deviations or percentages (%). The compliance of distributions of the analyzed scales with the normal distribution was checked with the Shapiro–Wilk test, and the homogeneity of variance with Levene’s test. For comparisons between means, Student’s *t*-test for independent variables was used. When the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not met, the Cochran–Cox test was used. Cohen’s *d* coefficient was used as a measure of the effect strength. The level of statistical significance was set at  $p \leq 0.05$ . All calculations were made with the use of Statistica 10.0 software package (Statsoft; 2011).

## 3. Results

In Table 2, the highest score was linked with Olympic-related motivations, and the lowest with the purposive scale. The descriptive statistics for three OVMS scales were as follows (Table 2):

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics for three OVMS scales.

| Variable        | N   | Mean | Min  | Max  | SD   | Skewness | Kurtosis | <i>p</i> Shapiro-Wilk |
|-----------------|-----|------|------|------|------|----------|----------|-----------------------|
| Olympic Related | 535 | 3.93 | 1.33 | 5.00 | 0.77 | −0.89    | 0.52     | 0.000                 |
| Egoistic        | 535 | 3.68 | 1.40 | 5.00 | 0.59 | −0.58    | 0.88     | 0.000                 |
| Purposive       | 535 | 3.52 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 0.69 | −0.68    | 1.12     | 0.000                 |

As regards the application of *t*-tests in cases without normal distributions, although the results of the Shapiro–Wilk test indicated that the assumption was not met, parametric tests were used due to the large sample. Moreover, the *t*-test is characterized by its significant resistance to disturbance of the normal distribution [43]. When verifying the statistical hypotheses, a parametric approach was used, following Francuz et al. [44].

Reliability analysis was also carried out using the Alpha Cronbach method. The statistics were calculated for the three scales separately. For the Olympic related and purposive scales, satisfactory values were obtained, i.e.,  $\alpha = 0.84$  and  $\alpha = 0.80$ , respectively, while for the egoistic scale, the calculated value turned out to be lower than the recommended, i.e.,  $\alpha = 0.7$ , and amounted to  $\alpha = 0.62$ . In this scale, removing motivation for materialistic rewards would increase the parameters to the expected/satisfactory value of  $\alpha = 0.73$ . Motivation for materialistic rewards does not fit here as it is difficult to associate sports volunteering with material rewards.

In Table 3, the most highly scored were motivations such as memories that will last a lifetime, to learn a new skill, and to help the others and the community, while the lowest: volunteering tradition in my family, for materialistic rewards, and commitment as a citizen. The descriptive statistics for all questionnaire items scored from the highest to the lowest were as follows (Table 3):

**Table 3.** Descriptive statistics for all questionnaire items scored from the highest to the lowest.

| Motivations                                                            | Mean | Min | Max | SD   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|-----|-----|------|
| Memories that will last a lifetime                                     | 4.19 | 1   | 5   | 0.86 |
| To learn a new skill                                                   | 4.13 | 1   | 5   | 0.90 |
| To help the others and the community                                   | 4.04 | 1   | 5   | 0.96 |
| To make job contacts                                                   | 4.01 | 1   | 5   | 0.95 |
| To attend an Olympic event                                             | 3.99 | 1   | 5   | 1.06 |
| Passion for the Games                                                  | 3.98 | 1   | 5   | 1.04 |
| To gain work experience which might lead to employment                 | 3.95 | 1   | 5   | 0.97 |
| To become associated with the Olympics                                 | 3.84 | 1   | 5   | 1.12 |
| Being a volunteer at the Olympic Games is considered to be prestigious | 3.83 | 1   | 5   | 1.07 |
| Spirit of solidarity and peace enshrined in the Olympic philosophy     | 3.82 | 1   | 5   | 1.07 |
| For nationalistic pride                                                | 3.79 | 1   | 5   | 0.98 |
| To support the spirit of volunteerism                                  | 3.76 | 1   | 5   | 0.96 |
| Opportunity to meet with elite athletes                                | 3.72 | 1   | 5   | 0.98 |
| Opportunity to establish contacts with experts from the same field     | 3.70 | 1   | 5   | 0.91 |
| To support my nation                                                   | 3.65 | 1   | 5   | 1.05 |
| Commitment as a citizen                                                | 3.57 | 1   | 5   | 1.02 |
| For materialistic rewards                                              | 2.61 | 1   | 5   | 0.97 |
| Volunteer tradition in my family                                       | 1.99 | 1   | 5   | 1.11 |

*Research Question 1:**Do sport volunteers' motivations differ by gender?*

Table 4 presents a summary of motivations and gender.

**Table 4.** Motivations and gender.

| Scale           | Women ( <i>n</i> = 282) |      | Men ( <i>n</i> = 253) |      | <i>p</i> Levene's | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> | <i>d</i> |
|-----------------|-------------------------|------|-----------------------|------|-------------------|----------|----------|----------|
|                 | M                       | SD   | M                     | SD   |                   |          |          |          |
| Olympic Related | 3.89                    | 0.79 | 3.97                  | 0.73 | 0.399             | 1.30     | 0.193    | 0.11     |
| Egoistic        | 3.65                    | 0.59 | 3.72                  | 0.60 | 0.836             | 1.40     | 0.162    | 0.12     |
| Purposive       | 3.50                    | 0.69 | 3.54                  | 0.70 | 0.531             | 0.71     | 0.475    | 0.06     |

There were no statistically significant differences between the groups.

*Research Question 2:**Are the motivations of volunteers residing in the host city different from those of other volunteers?*

Table 5 presents a summary of motivations and place of residence.

**Table 5.** Motivations and place of residence.

| Scale           | Krakow ( <i>n</i> = 353) |      | Another Place ( <i>n</i> = 182) |      | <i>p</i> Levene's | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> | <i>d</i> |
|-----------------|--------------------------|------|---------------------------------|------|-------------------|----------|----------|----------|
|                 | M                        | SD   | M                               | SD   |                   |          |          |          |
| Olympic Related | 3.91                     | 0.74 | 3.95                            | 0.82 | 0.315             | −0.55    | 0.579    | 0.05     |
| Egoistic        | 3.68                     | 0.57 | 3.68                            | 0.63 | 0.208             | −0.03    | 0.978    | 0.00     |
| Purposive       | 3.54                     | 0.66 | 3.47                            | 0.74 | 0.312             | 1.02     | 0.307    | 0.09     |

There were no statistically significant differences between the groups.

*Research Question 3:**Do sport volunteers' motivations differ by being and not being professionally active?*

Table 6 presents a summary of motivations and professional activity.

**Table 6.** Motivations and professional activity.

| Scale           | Professionally Non-Active (n = 459) |      | Professionally Active (n = 76) |      | p Levene's | t     | p     | d    |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|------|--------------------------------|------|------------|-------|-------|------|
|                 | M                                   | SD   | M                              | SD   |            |       |       |      |
| Olympic Related | 3.93                                | 0.76 | 3.92                           | 0.82 | 0.335      | 0.12  | 0.901 | 0.01 |
| Egoistic        | 3.66                                | 0.58 | 3.78                           | 0.66 | 0.081      | −1.63 | 0.103 | 0.19 |
| Purposive       | 3.52                                | 0.68 | 3.48                           | 0.78 | 0.174      | 0.48  | 0.629 | 0.06 |

There were no statistically significant differences between the groups.

*Research Question 4:*

*Do sport volunteers' motivations differ by having or not having previous experience with sports volunteering?*

Table 7 presents a summary of motivations and sports volunteering experience.

**Table 7.** Motivations and sports volunteering experience.

| Scale           | without Experience (n = 463) |      | with Experience (n = 72) |      | p Levene's | t     | p      | d    |
|-----------------|------------------------------|------|--------------------------|------|------------|-------|--------|------|
|                 | M                            | SD   | M                        | SD   |            |       |        |      |
| Olympic Related | 3.89                         | 0.76 | 4.14                     | 0.77 | 0.811      | −2.54 | 0.011  | 0.32 |
| Egoistic        | 3.66                         | 0.58 | 3.83                     | 0.65 | 0.269      | −2.30 | 0.022  | 0.28 |
| Purposive       | 3.44                         | 0.67 | 4.01                     | 0.62 | 0.730      | −6.83 | <0.001 | 0.89 |

Respondents with sports volunteering experience reported higher mean scores than those with no sports volunteering experience. The differences between the two groups were statistically significant; comparisons between all questionnaire items are listed in Appendix B.

#### 4. Discussion

International sporting events such as the European Games are characterized by their unity of time, place, and action, and require large human resources for their successful organization. Volunteers have become one of the most important components of multi-sport games. In fact they provide a great financial advantage, because the costs of employment of thousands of workers would have been exceedingly high. That is why the scale of the games requires the organizing committee to recruit more volunteers to work in various areas. The increasing significance of volunteers within the Olympic movement, and, in consequence, the importance of research addressing the specific characteristics and experiences of individuals who dedicate their own time and efforts to the Olympic Games can be observed.

The present study focused on the identification of motivational factors of volunteers during a large-scale sports event—the European Games 2023 to be held in Krakow, Lesser Poland Province in Poland. Its aim was to investigate the relationships between selected socio-demographic factors and the motivation of people involved in voluntary work for the event. The study showed that motivations of sports volunteers do not vary with regard to gender, place of residence, and professional activity. We assumed that women would declare other motivations than men, as was indicated by Downward et al. [32], and that different motivations would be declared by people who were and were not professionally active. We also expected that respondents from Krakow would declare other motivations related to, e.g., the sense of local pride, but the study results disproved these assumptions.

Notwithstanding, the findings of the present study indicate that volunteers' motivations differ depending on their experience in sports volunteering. The values declared by the respondents were the highest for the Olympic related, egoistic, and purposive scales, among individuals with previous sports volunteering experience.

A study by Giannoulakis, Wang, and Gray [25], who also used the OVMS, on a group of 206 volunteers working at the Athens Olympics showed that the predominant factors were the Olympic-related motivations such as the desire of volunteers to associate with the Olympic movement, being involved in the Olympics, or meeting Olympic athletes. The results of our study are different. The highest values were reported for such motivations as to attend an Olympic event, passion for the Games, and to gain work experience; while the lowest for volunteering tradition in family, for materialistic rewards, and commitment as a citizen. It should be noted, however, that in both studies the Olympic motivations were the most significant. Their high position was also confirmed by Fairley et al. [27] and Koutrou et al. [29]. Interestingly, since the research by Williams et al. [26] a quarter of a century ago, nothing has changed in the context of motivations based on materialistic rewards. Even then, receiving free gadgets, souvenirs, or tickets to the event was not an explanation encouraging participation in volunteering. Our research showed that such incentives are still ineffective and volunteers pay attention to other motivations.

On the other hand, the results of the present study and the study by Giannoulakis et al. differ from those by Caldwell and Andereck [45], Farrell et al. [22], Johnson et al. [39], and Strigas and Jackson [46] in which Olympic volunteers rated the purposive factor as the least important. The values declared by respondents in our study were the highest for Olympic related, egoistic, and purposive scales among those with previous experience in sports volunteering. This difference can probably be explained by the age of the respondents, for whom the fact of participating in the Olympic event, the possibility of having life connections with the Olympic movement, or meetings with the Olympians are the greatest motivations. Our respondents, due to their age, were a group in the so-called developmental period leading to full adulthood, which is characterized by the search for their own identity and life roles [47]. They can find them, among other things, through contacts with role models (who may be athletes). The Olympics themselves also play an extremely important role in the world; thanks to which, they can have their own power of attracting those interested in cooperation and, as a result, inspire to act and attract the most ambitious individuals.

However, individual motives, not only motives of entire groups, must also be taken into account. In the case of gender-specific motivation, the most statistically significant are to help others and the community and to support my nation. It turns out that the motivations of women and men in sports volunteering are consistent with the motivations of women and men actively practicing sports. Poczta et al. [48] in her research on sporting charity events showed that men are more self-centered, and women have more empathy and are by nature more sensitive and understanding. They are also much more able to assume the perspective of another person than men [49]. In turn, according to Lai et al. [50], stronger identification of national identity among men is associated with greater volunteer motivation. In the case of place of residence, none of the motives were statistically significant; however, individual motivations depending on professional activity turned out to be statistically significant. They included to help the others and the community, to make job contacts, volunteering tradition in the family, and to support the spirit of volunteerism. These results show that professionally active people pay more attention to the idea of voluntary work, primarily aimed at voluntary and conscious assistance, and that non-voluntary workers see opportunities to gain future potential professional contacts. However, motivations in the context of sports volunteering experience definitely stand out from other variables with the largest number of statistically significant motives. They include to help others and the community, to support my nation, volunteering tradition in the family, opportunity to establish contacts with experts from the same field, commitment as a citizen and passion for the Games, to support the spirit of volunteerism, for national pride, to attend an Olympic event, and Olympic Games considered to be prestigious. This shows that volunteers with previous volunteering experience perceive the multi-dimensional advantages of volunteering much more strongly. For all respondents, regardless of their gender or experience in volunteering or lack of thereof, one of the most

important motives was to help others. Moreover, home and family traditions also have an impact on the volunteers' motivations. People who have been involved and experienced in voluntary work for a long time are distinguished by the passion for Olympic Games and sense of national pride.

The findings of the study are important for organizers of sports events. The number of volunteers providing services is increasing, but as Karlis [51] noted, in order to ensure that these services are of sufficient quality, volunteers must possess an Olympic education knowledge base. The present study indicates that people with experience in volunteering are the most motivated. This means that they not only have already completed a number of training courses in this field but are also passionate about this work and Olympism. Karlis claims that Olympic administrators need to consider specific recruiting and training practices to provide volunteers with an Olympic education knowledge base. This research confirms the results of previous studies showing that during the recruitment process the experience of volunteers is important and affects their motivation to work.

A limitation of the study was the fact that in the COVID-19 pandemic, the surveys could only be disseminated online. Although we made every effort to ensure that the surveys reached the students of the University of Physical Education in Krakow, who had signed up online as sport management volunteers during the 2023 European Games, due to the lack of direct contact with the respondents, we cannot be sure whether the indicated data by the respondents were true and that we actually surveyed individuals in the target group we are interested in. The Internet creates excellent conditions for maintaining anonymity, and its users willingly take advantage of it by assuming a completely different identity in the virtual world, and this is one of the many serious limitations of online research. Secondly, each of the participants in this type of research probably had different conditions and thus different possibilities of, e.g., data transfer. In addition, there are mundane problems such as interrupting participation in the study due to technical reasons or different IT competences of respondents. For this reason, convenience sampling can also be considered a limitation of the research—the choice of participants due to their Internet availability, which excluded respondents who did not use the Internet.

Recruiting volunteers from other areas of Poland could provide researchers with the opportunity to further examine their motivational reasons, both for multiple-sports and smaller events [52,53]. Finally, about 66% of the respondents were native Krakovian; however, the place of origin was not of statistical significance in the study.

## 5. Conclusions

The results of the present study can be used to improve the effectiveness of volunteer recruitment and management strategies at other sports events. Especially that it also turns out that earlier volunteering experience increases one's motivation to work voluntarily in other areas. It is important information for organizers of sporting events. An interesting idea for the future is to create a volunteer database, which would facilitate their recruitment for subsequent events and contribute to the sustainable management of volunteers, especially since the majority of event organizers constantly cooperate with the same volunteers [54]. The satisfaction with voluntary participation in a sport event is of great significance; thus, it is important to support volunteers, keep in touch with them, and encourage them to cooperate. An Olympic event always arouses the desires of individuals and the need for voluntary participation in these significant sporting events. As a result, it appears that volunteers tend to follow motivations related to the Games themselves, rather than the material, external, recreational, and purposeful factors identified in previous research. However, their positive experiences can affect their quality of life.

The recruitment of volunteers for the Olympic event begins after their organization is awarded to the host city. A planning process then takes place, which commences at the end of the previous games. The host state carries out the long volunteer recruitment process. The four-year period is crucial, and the volunteer recruitment process is generally based on candidates' education, training, and motivation to work during the Games. Therefore,

experience and adequate motivation have a major influence on volunteers' involvement in their task.

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**Institutional Review Board Statement:** The study was conducted according to the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki. The study did not require formal ethical approval, because in accordance with the rules in force in Poland, the Bioethics Committee did not submit applications for surveys consisting in the use of standardized surveys, used in accordance with their intended purpose, when the research will develop statistically selected elements of the survey.

**Informed Consent Statement:** The questionnaire did not require the completion of a separate participant information sheet or consent form but clearly indicated that all questionnaire takers give informed consent to the study. Respondents were informed about the course and character of the survey. The survey was voluntary and confidential.

**Data Availability Statement:** The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to no access to publicly repository.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## Appendix A

**Table A1.** List of motivations in the OVMS.

| Motivation |                                                                        | Dimension       |
|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1.         | To help the others and the community                                   | Purposive       |
| 2.         | To become associated with the Olympics                                 | Olympic Related |
| 3.         | To make job contacts                                                   | Egoistic        |
| 4.         | To support my nation                                                   | Purposive       |
| 5.         | To gain work experience which might lead to employment                 | Egoistic        |
| 6.         | Volunteer tradition in my family                                       | Purposive       |
| 7.         | Opportunity to establish contacts with experts from the same field     | Egoistic        |
| 8.         | Commitment as a citizen                                                | Purposive       |
| 9.         | Opportunity to meet with elite athletes                                | Olympic Related |
| 10.        | Passion for the Games                                                  | Olympic Related |
| 11.        | Spirit of solidarity and peace enshrined in the Olympic philosophy     | Purposive       |
| 12.        | To support the spirit of volunteerism                                  | Purposive       |
| 13.        | To learn new skills                                                    | Egoistic        |
| 14.        | Memories that will last a lifetime                                     | Olympic Related |
| 15.        | For nationalistic pride                                                | Purposive       |
| 16.        | For materialistic rewards                                              | Egoistic        |
| 17.        | To attend an Olympic event                                             | Olympic Related |
| 18.        | Being a volunteer at the Olympic Games is considered to be prestigious | Olympic Related |

## Appendix B

Table A2. Motivations and gender/place of residence.

| Motivation | Motivations and Gender |      |                  |      |            |       |       |      | Motivations and Place of Residence |      |                            |      |            |       |       |      |
|------------|------------------------|------|------------------|------|------------|-------|-------|------|------------------------------------|------|----------------------------|------|------------|-------|-------|------|
|            | Women<br>(n = 282)     |      | Men<br>(n = 253) |      | p Levene's | t     | p     | d    | Krakow<br>(n = 353)                |      | Another Place<br>(n = 182) |      | p Levene's | t     | p     | d    |
|            | M                      | SD   | M                | SD   |            |       |       |      | M                                  | SD   | M                          | SD   |            |       |       |      |
| 1.         | 4.16                   | 0.87 | 3.92             | 1.03 | 0.011      | −2.83 | 0.004 | 0.25 | 4.09                               | 0.93 | 3.96                       | 1.00 | 0.582      | 1.45  | 0.148 | 0.13 |
| 2.         | 3.77                   | 1.16 | 3.92             | 1.07 | 0.034      | 1.58  | 0.117 | 0.14 | 3.84                               | 1.08 | 3.85                       | 1.18 | 0.056      | −0.16 | 0.876 | 0.01 |
| 3.         | 3.96                   | 0.95 | 4.08             | 0.95 | 0.754      | 1.43  | 0.152 | 0.12 | 4.03                               | 0.94 | 3.98                       | 0.97 | 0.766      | 0.52  | 0.605 | 0.05 |
| 4.         | 3.50                   | 1.08 | 3.82             | 0.99 | 0.040      | 3.52  | 0.001 | 0.30 | 3.69                               | 1.01 | 3.58                       | 1.13 | 0.026      | 1.07  | 0.286 | 0.10 |
| 5.         | 3.89                   | 0.96 | 4.01             | 0.97 | 0.513      | 1.41  | 0.160 | 0.12 | 3.95                               | 0.95 | 3.94                       | 1.00 | 0.158      | 0.11  | 0.915 | 0.01 |
| 6.         | 1.98                   | 1.10 | 2.00             | 1.13 | 0.867      | 0.22  | 0.826 | 0.02 | 2.00                               | 1.10 | 1.97                       | 1.14 | 0.542      | 0.24  | 0.809 | 0.02 |
| 7.         | 3.63                   | 0.92 | 3.78             | 0.89 | 0.275      | 1.88  | 0.061 | 0.16 | 3.72                               | 0.88 | 3.67                       | 0.97 | 0.026      | 0.54  | 0.589 | 0.05 |
| 8.         | 3.49                   | 1.02 | 3.65             | 1.01 | 0.974      | 1.85  | 0.065 | 0.16 | 3.63                               | 0.99 | 3.45                       | 1.06 | 0.286      | 1.89  | 0.059 | 0.17 |
| 9.         | 3.66                   | 1.00 | 3.80             | 0.95 | 0.195      | 1.69  | 0.092 | 0.15 | 3.73                               | 0.96 | 3.71                       | 1.00 | 0.258      | 0.25  | 0.804 | 0.02 |
| 10.        | 3.96                   | 1.05 | 4.01             | 1.02 | 0.778      | 0.61  | 0.545 | 0.05 | 3.96                               | 0.99 | 4.03                       | 1.13 | 0.120      | −0.80 | 0.425 | 0.07 |
| 11.        | 3.79                   | 1.08 | 3.86             | 1.05 | 0.514      | 0.76  | 0.446 | 0.07 | 3.83                               | 1.02 | 3.81                       | 1.16 | 0.011      | 0.19  | 0.848 | 0.02 |
| 12.        | 3.83                   | 0.97 | 3.68             | 0.95 | 0.730      | −1.80 | 0.072 | 0.16 | 3.79                               | 0.94 | 3.69                       | 1.01 | 0.151      | 1.18  | 0.240 | 0.11 |
| 13.        | 4.13                   | 0.94 | 4.12             | 0.87 | 0.238      | −0.07 | 0.948 | 0.01 | 4.10                               | 0.90 | 4.17                       | 0.92 | 0.834      | −0.83 | 0.408 | 0.08 |
| 14.        | 4.16                   | 0.87 | 4.22             | 0.85 | 0.849      | 0.87  | 0.382 | 0.08 | 4.21                               | 0.85 | 4.14                       | 0.88 | 0.430      | 0.95  | 0.340 | 0.09 |
| 15.        | 3.73                   | 1.01 | 3.85             | 0.94 | 0.102      | 1.37  | 0.171 | 0.12 | 3.75                               | 0.95 | 3.86                       | 1.03 | 0.322      | −1.16 | 0.245 | 0.10 |
| 16.        | 2.62                   | 0.93 | 2.60             | 1.01 | 0.098      | −0.24 | 0.814 | 0.02 | 2.60                               | 0.98 | 2.64                       | 0.94 | 0.357      | −0.45 | 0.654 | 0.04 |
| 17.        | 3.96                   | 1.09 | 4.03             | 1.02 | 0.316      | 0.81  | 0.419 | 0.07 | 3.95                               | 1.03 | 4.07                       | 1.11 | 0.336      | −1.15 | 0.250 | 0.10 |
| 18.        | 3.82                   | 1.09 | 3.85             | 1.05 | 0.543      | 0.33  | 0.742 | 0.03 | 3.79                               | 1.05 | 3.92                       | 1.11 | 0.713      | −1.30 | 0.194 | 0.12 |

Table A3. Motivations and professional activity/experience in sports volunteering.

| Motivation | Motivations and Professional Activity     |      |                                   |      |            |       |       |      | Motivations and Experience in Sports Volunteering |      |                                |      |            |       |       |      |
|------------|-------------------------------------------|------|-----------------------------------|------|------------|-------|-------|------|---------------------------------------------------|------|--------------------------------|------|------------|-------|-------|------|
|            | Professionally<br>Non-Active<br>(n = 459) |      | Professionally<br>Active (n = 76) |      | p Levene's | t     | p     | d    | Without<br>Experience<br>(n = 463)                |      | With<br>Experience<br>(n = 72) |      | p Levene's | t     | p     | d    |
|            | M                                         | SD   | M                                 | SD   |            |       |       |      | M                                                 | SD   | M                              | SD   |            |       |       |      |
| 1.         | 4.12                                      | 0.91 | 3.61                              | 1.13 | 0.000      | 3.75  | 0.000 | 0.50 | 4.00                                              | 0.96 | 4.36                           | 0.88 | 0.775      | −3.04 | 0.003 | 0.40 |
| 2.         | 3.83                                      | 1.13 | 3.93                              | 1.04 | 0.115      | −0.78 | 0.433 | 0.10 | 3.81                                              | 1.11 | 4.03                           | 1.15 | 0.603      | −1.53 | 0.127 | 0.19 |
| 3.         | 3.97                                      | 0.92 | 4.25                              | 1.08 | 0.029      | −2.10 | 0.039 | 0.28 | 4.00                                              | 0.95 | 4.07                           | 0.97 | 0.282      | −0.54 | 0.588 | 0.07 |
| 4.         | 3.63                                      | 1.04 | 3.76                              | 1.12 | 0.273      | −0.99 | 0.320 | 0.12 | 3.60                                              | 1.05 | 4.00                           | 0.96 | 0.068      | −3.05 | 0.002 | 0.40 |
| 5.         | 3.92                                      | 0.93 | 4.09                              | 1.16 | 0.002      | −1.22 | 0.225 | 0.16 | 3.93                                              | 0.97 | 4.04                           | 0.94 | 0.549      | −0.90 | 0.367 | 0.12 |
| 6.         | 1.95                                      | 1.09 | 2.25                              | 1.22 | 0.026      | −2.04 | 0.044 | 0.26 | 1.77                                              | 0.88 | 3.42                           | 1.39 | 0.000      | −9.76 | 0.000 | 1.45 |
| 7.         | 3.69                                      | 0.88 | 3.78                              | 1.08 | 0.024      | −0.67 | 0.502 | 0.09 | 3.66                                              | 0.90 | 3.97                           | 0.89 | 0.061      | −2.74 | 0.006 | 0.35 |
| 8.         | 3.56                                      | 1.01 | 3.58                              | 1.06 | 0.624      | −0.12 | 0.907 | 0.01 | 3.49                                              | 1.01 | 4.07                           | 0.89 | 0.033      | −5.04 | 0.000 | 0.61 |
| 9.         | 3.75                                      | 0.94 | 3.55                              | 1.16 | 0.004      | 1.42  | 0.159 | 0.19 | 3.70                                              | 0.98 | 3.90                           | 0.95 | 0.139      | −1.68 | 0.094 | 0.21 |
| 10.        | 3.98                                      | 1.02 | 4.01                              | 1.13 | 0.380      | −0.27 | 0.786 | 0.03 | 3.94                                              | 1.04 | 4.26                           | 0.96 | 0.914      | −2.48 | 0.013 | 0.32 |
| 11.        | 3.81                                      | 1.07 | 3.91                              | 1.07 | 0.439      | −0.77 | 0.442 | 0.10 | 3.80                                              | 1.07 | 3.96                           | 1.04 | 0.689      | −1.18 | 0.240 | 0.15 |
| 12.        | 3.80                                      | 0.94 | 3.46                              | 1.06 | 0.031      | 2.65  | 0.009 | 0.34 | 3.69                                              | 0.97 | 4.18                           | 0.81 | 0.116      | −4.08 | 0.000 | 0.55 |
| 13.        | 4.12                                      | 0.89 | 4.16                              | 0.97 | 0.154      | −0.34 | 0.734 | 0.04 | 4.11                                              | 0.91 | 4.25                           | 0.83 | 0.849      | −1.26 | 0.208 | 0.16 |
| 14.        | 4.19                                      | 0.85 | 4.20                              | 0.94 | 0.093      | −0.11 | 0.909 | 0.01 | 4.17                                              | 0.86 | 4.32                           | 0.85 | 0.649      | −1.40 | 0.161 | 0.18 |
| 15.        | 3.79                                      | 0.96 | 3.80                              | 1.06 | 0.216      | −0.13 | 0.894 | 0.02 | 3.74                                              | 0.98 | 4.11                           | 0.90 | 0.541      | −3.03 | 0.003 | 0.40 |
| 16.        | 2.61                                      | 0.94 | 2.63                              | 1.12 | 0.016      | −0.18 | 0.861 | 0.02 | 2.58                                              | 0.96 | 2.81                           | 1.00 | 0.817      | −1.84 | 0.067 | 0.23 |
| 17.        | 3.98                                      | 1.04 | 4.04                              | 1.15 | 0.241      | −0.42 | 0.677 | 0.05 | 3.95                                              | 1.06 | 4.24                           | 1.04 | 0.833      | −2.11 | 0.036 | 0.27 |
| 18.        | 3.85                                      | 1.04 | 3.76                              | 1.25 | 0.007      | 0.54  | 0.589 | 0.07 | 3.79                                              | 1.07 | 4.08                           | 1.03 | 0.526      | −2.13 | 0.034 | 0.27 |

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