
Evaluating how the game of snooker can make a positive contribution to enhancing people's well-being in the later years

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The purpose of this small scale study was to measure, evaluate and discuss how snooker could possibly contribute to an older person's well-being. Six participants from Age UK were selected after completing a pre-screening exercise to see if they were eligible to take part in the study. This study also sets out to focus and measure the well-being of older people before and after playing snooker for a set period of weeks. Scores taken for well-being measurements were from the well-established Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS). The WEMWBS is a scale of 14 positively worded items that assesses a population's mental well-being. The WEMWBS scale for this study was scaled with 14 statements of which four statements related to the snooker activity that participants had taken part in, and results were discussed respectively. Outcomes of this study suggest that snooker, as a leisurely pursuit, can positively contribute and positively impact an older person's well-being in a variety of ways, from aspects of their daily lives to their experiences of actively playing snooker. What is paramount from the research's findings is that snooker for older people has the ability to build social participation, knowledge building especially around the game of snooker, engagement in sports and most of all, maximising a social experience. There is scope for the study to be investigated further with a larger sample of older people, but for now, this study facilitates a starting point for discussion and practical application around encouraging older people to play snooker.

Keywords: mental health; older people; snooker; sports participation; well-being

There exists a well-established need to support and enhance the wellbeing of older people through utilising opportunities within sports and leisure. Interventions through social pastimes give greater access to older people to actively participate in sports and leisure in their daily lives. The variances of leisurely pursuits and sociability, alongside the quality of life that older people lead, can promote a positive outlook as well as sustaining a well-balanced sense of well-being for older adults in their later years. Therefore, it is important to sustain the development of our holistic well-being as much as possible through the latter stages of our lives. Strawbridge (2011) advocates the notion that if health and well-being is strengthened in the older generation, that they would be able to participate in sporting activities at more regular intervals of their lives. With this idea of older people actively participating in sports, one asks whether there is room for the game of snooker, either as a leisurely activity or as competitive sport, to contribute towards widening participation and to the well-being of elderly people. One such story of an optimistic view of the game of snooker doing just that with older people was reported in the *Times* newspaper in 1986 titled: 'Snooker gives the elderly new life'. The story emphasised the pleasure that playing snooker gave older people and indeed had become popular at a residential home in London.

Soon after a snooker table had been given as a gift to the residents, it was being used and played upon most of the time. Alongside the gift of the snooker table, came a free coaching session from the veteran snooker professional, Ray Reardon. This initiative increased the popularity of the game among the elderly in the residential home.

This story around encouraging older people to pursue snooker as a benefit for their well-being inspired the intention of this small-scale study as it attempts to introduce snooker as an everyday leisurely activity for older people. A small number of participants aged over 65 years plus were required, for this small-scale study. The participants were to engage in playing snooker for a couple of hours per week for a period of eight weeks. From playing snooker for this period, this study measured the participant's well-being before and after they have actively engaged in playing snooker. In addition to this participants were asked to establish whether playing snooker had been a positive experience and contributed to the needs of their well-being.

BACKGROUND

It is without doubt that today's society is ever-changing, but the most dominant change is that people are living much longer than expected. According to the coalition government policy for older people, life expectancy for older people in today's society is at an average of around 86 years. This is expected to rise to an average of 91 years by 2050. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS, 2008) the projections for people living over the age of 85 years is set to rise from 1.3 million people in 2007 to 3.1 million by 2032. Therefore, at this later stage of people's life, it is important to consider taking care of the welfare of older people from their physical health to their well-being and building social contacts in the community. Hence helping older people to engage in leisurely activities is one way of supporting an active lifestyle and building peer relationships within the community.

Age UK promoted their ethos of active living and positive mental wellbeing from a lottery-funded project named 'Fit as a Fiddle' in 2007, which involved providing people over 50 years of age with a range of activities from healthy eating to activities that improved physical and mental wellbeing across England. The 'Fit as a fiddle' initiative promoted healthy living for over 350,000 older people over the age of 50 years. Meeting the holistic needs of older people is a priority for Age UK; this is clearly defined in their strategic plan for 2018–2021. What's more, their plan outlines measures in key areas of promoting activities for older people which lends itself to the basis of this study. The plan from Age UK follows a format of introducing a range of activities that are positive for physical, mental and social health, and well-being, then measuring the outcomes of these activities, and also going on to examining the end

outcomes of the activities and finally, measuring the engagement of activities have made for the older person (Age UK, 2017). Where this study fits in to the strategy outlined by Age UK is within the gap of facilitating programmes for improving the wellbeing of older people.

The National Service Framework (NSF) for Older People (Department of Health and Social Care, 2001) is another documented policy that sets out the principles for developing a range of standards of care to improve the health and well-being of older people. The NSF suggests that there is growing evidence to support the modification of risk factors affecting older people by engaging in initiatives that improve their health and sense of well-being. One of the key standards, standard eight, focuses on 'promoting a healthy and active life for life in older age'. This includes wider initiatives to improve the health and well-being of older people from a spectrum of areas such as nutrition, physical activity and social care. From those wide areas within the NSF, this study concentrates on a specific section of the NSF document that will facilitate snooker as a health promotional activity for older people (Sagoo, 2017). The section is outlined below:

'Access to wider community facilities, libraries, education, and leisure for example, will enable older people to participate in and contribute to society.' – Department of Health and Social Care, 2001

Therefore, playing snooker can be an example of accessing a leisurely pursuit for the older generation. Furthermore, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE, 2016) guidelines for improving older peoples mental wellbeing, encourages interventions for older people to participate in group and / or one to one activities to improve social cohesion among this group of older adults. In addition to this, the World Health Organization (WHO) makes recommendations for encouraging physical activity at all levels for over 65 years old people in its guidelines published in 2011. WHO (2011) suggest that the daily functioning of physical activity is the main factor for reducing many physical ailments such as cardiorespiratory dysfunction and skeletal-muscular weaknesses. Therefore, it is imperative for older people to engage in mild to moderate intensities of exercise, whether that is from daily activities such as walks or household chores, or pursuing sporting or leisurely activities.

Along with international policy, in the United Kingdom, the NICE (2016) published a set of statements outlining the quality standards for 'Mental Wellbeing and Independence for Older People'. Quality statement 2 and 3 examines the physical activity and social interaction and involvement of tailored activities in the daily lives of older people. The rationale for older people taking part in physical activities from quality statement two was initiated to reduce the risk of loneliness and isolation in their homes, coupled with engaging in tailored activities that would suit the needs of older person, therefore benefitting their mental wellbeing. In turn, the rationale for older people increasing social participation with the uptake of leisurely or physical activity can provide independence and social integration with peers, alongside participating in personalised activities that are enjoyed by groups of older people. Given these objectives set out by the NICE (2016) guiding standards, it identifies a gap that could be filled by tailoring snooker as activity for engagement as a either a one to one or group based activity for older people. Snooker could possibly best fit the demands of all legislative requirements around improving wellbeing and be of interest to older people as a form of sporting or leisurely pursuit that helps to improve their well-being.

Maintaining well-being and activity in older people

From a review of literature regarding well-being and older people, Stanley and Cheek (2003) found that there are many view points for defining the wellbeing of older people, though the overarching definition includes words leaning towards ones emotions for example, happiness fear sadness and surprise. Stanley and Cheek (2003) suggest that well-being is far more complex and difficult to measure concisely so extended discussions should be had around the different meanings of wellbeing. Allen (2008) takes a

meaningful discussion of well-being from the context of older people and states that feelings of positive well-being stretches beyond the richness of being wealthy and healthy, it is essentially about emotional stability, not from the angle of mental health but from the lens of broader emotional indicators such as life satisfaction.

While most research around older people emphasises physical nature and its complications, mental well-being is sometimes overlooked. Therefore, attention must be directed towards supporting the mental well-being of older people through the opportunities that present themselves to participate in social, sporting or leisure activities. Fawcett (2014) reports that as older people move into retirement and in some cases isolation, there seems to be trade off when giving up their jobs for increased social engagement and participation in community based leisure activities. In Fawcett's earlier work, exploring the relationship between day care attendance and psychosocial outcomes in older people, found that attendance to day care centres or clubs was vital for older people to raise a sense of well-being in themselves. Fawcett's study showed that when older people engaged in social activities whether it is in day care centre or some kind of social club, it showed a sense of collectiveness, as well as cohesion among the group of participants. This in turn promoted a sense of 'inclusiveness, belonging and ownership', and forged links between people in this age group and their socialisation in the wider community.

Research carried out by Fox (1999), suggests that there is growing evidence to support the link in positive effectiveness, such as increased feeling and emotions of happiness and satisfaction between physical activity, when partaking activities as part of developing one's positive mental well-being in older adults. Moreover, Warr, Butcher and Robertson (2004) carried out an investigation to measure the activity and well-being from data collected by 1167 respondents between the ages of 50-74 years. The results from their research indicated that there were little differences between genders when measuring wellbeing scores. Warr et al (2004) suggest two reasons for this result, firstly engaging in activities are often associated with a sense of fulfilment, achievement or goal setting, secondly, it is the type of activity that the older person is engaging in that improves their wellbeing. In the case of this study, participants were invited to take part in the snooker activity, so it can be suggested that those who maybe be familiar with the game of snooker are more likely to participate in the snooker activity as opposed to those who are unfamiliar with the game. Likewise, those who were keen to try the game for the very first time may find the snooker activity an enjoyable experience.

From the summary of research into the wellbeing of older people by Age UK (2017), there are areas of older people's wellbeing from a survey that was responded by over 15,000 older people over two years. The wellbeing survey was devised by academics from the University of Southampton and the Age UK Policy and Research Department. The research investigation covered five domains of holistic wellbeing in older people ranging from their personal characteristics, the social features of older people, physical and mental health, personal resources and access to local services. The statistical data from the survey found that when older people engaged with an activity, albeit creative or cultural, their well-being significantly improved. What was also apparent from the results were that thinking skills, physical activities, social participation and mental wellbeing had a direct positive effect on the overall well-being of older people. This suggests that engaging in social activities such as snooker may possibly have a contributory impact on an older person's wellbeing, especially as playing snooker could also be viewed as an independent activity. Sagoo (2017) reassures the point that snooker is an independent activity, as playing snooker is primarily a played in a solo capacity, even if played with a partner.

Sports and well-being in older people

Though there is little research around sport and wellbeing for older people, a plethora of research was found to illustrate the psychological benefits of exercise for older people. From the literature that sat closely to this research was a study by Fox et al (2007) which founded the 'The Better Ageing Project'. The Better Ageing Project produced by Fox et al (2007) provided an opportunity to assess well-being and quality of life using standardised questionnaires for a 176 adults aged 70 and over. The quantitative data showed minor increases for the psychological benefits of the exercise intervention, but nevertheless this was positive in terms of suggesting that exercise is beneficial for wellbeing. Fox et al (2007) found that engagement in structured exercise can improve aspects of psychological well-being such as mood and self-perceptions in older adults. Fox et al (2007) also found that the relationship between wellbeing and physical activity in older adults reflected an overall positive feeling. Time spent on activities by older people in the study was variable and dependent on the intensity of the physical activity, nevertheless results of the 'Better Aging' exercise programme indicated improvements in older people's holistic physical health and mental well-being.

Living a healthier life is often a major motivational factor that encourages older people to participate in sport. However, sporting participation is also dependant on the choice of sport that older people wants to partake in. The lesser physically demanding sports or leisure pursuits are the more preferred option such as cycling, walking and swimming (Tischer, Hartmann-Tews, & Combrink, 2011). The state of physical health of the older person dictates the activity they take part in if an older person was restricted by their health this would deter them from exercise. It was also found that the intensity of exercise for older people was dependent on the seasonal variations, for example light outdoor activities were found to be enjoyable due to the summer weather conditions, for example swimming (Ryu, Bae, Suh, & Heo, 2016). So to was light winter indoor activities, for example bowling, suggesting that light to moderate activities whichever the season contributed positively to older peoples physical and mental wellbeing. Therefore Kyu et al's (2016) findings, suggest that an indoor activity such as snooker could clearly benefit an older person's well-being as it is not very intensive and has the advantage of being played indoors. More so, systematic review (Windle, Hughes, Linck, Russell, & Woods, 2010) was carried out a systemic review to investigate the effectiveness of physical exercise on older people's mental health. They found a generalised view that older people's mental wellbeing is adaptable from whichever exercise they take part in. However, suggested that more research needs to be carried out explore the effectiveness of the changes in mental wellbeing through exercise. This study may possibly fill that gap in the research from a significant perspective, as this research explores the benefits and effectiveness of mental being from playing a moderately light exercise, namely snooker.

Snooker and older people

It is well known fact that there are risks around one's health and well-being that impede an older person's independence and wellbeing. The UK's Chief Medical Officers (CMOs, Department of Health and Social Care, 2011) makes recommendations that older adults must exercise at the same rate as adults ranged between 19–64 years, however particular attention must be paid to improving balance and coordination with physical exercise. Though it could be said that snooker is not the most rigorous physical sport, coordination plays a huge part in playing snooker (Sagoo, 2017) – this also plays a part in attributing to meeting some of the activities levels set out by the CMO's (2011).

In December 1986, snooker and pool were warmly received as an activity among elderly residents of a care home in west London, after a coaching session by Ray Reardon, the former world champion. Though the residents were given a snooker table as a Christmas present that year, they were very keen to pursue snooker as an active recreation. Following this positive reaction from elderly residents, though

it was many years ago, it is important to consider snooker as an enjoyable active pastime for elderly even in this day and age.

Lassen's study (2014) of older men taking part in billiards, supported cue sports as an active pursuit for older people and that sometimes the game of cue sports is overlooked by leading authorities in healthcare. Lassen (2014) stated that playing billiards, which has some small similarities to snooker, is played with a composed passive attitude that can be relaxing and enjoyed for hours on end. Lassen goes on to assert that the rhythmic play in billiards can be translated as the ageing process as a slow but enjoyable process. Lassen (2014) concludes that billiards and indeed most cue sports could be used a vital tool from the lens of health and well-being in aiding the ageing process.

METHODOLOGY

The intention of this pilot project is to introduce snooker as an everyday activity for elderly people. Approximately 6–10 participants of 65 years plus, were required for this small scale study. The participants were sourced and pre-screened for eligibility by Age UK in Berkshire. The focus of the participants is to actively engage in snooker on periodic basis and to establish whether snooker has been positively contributed to the well-being of the participants. In order for the study to be implemented the WPBSA were required to discuss the contribution made from both Age UK in supplying the volunteers and contacting the local snooker clubs to give up some free time for participants to actively play snooker. Participants would play snooker either as individuals or collectively as a group for two hours per week for approximately eight weeks. The participants were then questioned about how playing snooker has contributed to their wellbeing before and after the snooker activity, and then finally a focus group was held at the end of the small scale study. The WPBSA had also assigned a snooker coach to assist with the snooker activity and support the snooker playing needs of the participants e.g. how to hold a snooker cue, how to take shot and other basic snooker playing skills. The snooker activity was structured through the snooker coach for eight weeks. It was beneficial to have some structure to the snooker activity as these allowed participants who may have never played the game of snooker to find out about the basic rules of playing and get some assistance when required.

This study used both qualitative and quantitative research methods. By using a mixed methods approach to this research it explores a realistic value of measuring the participants' well-being. By mixing both research methods it increases the chances of collecting evidence to justify the research outcome and allows a connection to be made from both qualitative and quantitative data sets, thus providing a balanced perspective (McKim, 2017). The use of the WEMWBS questionnaire and focus group interviews at the end of the snooker activity were appropriate for this small scale study. As this was a small scale study, a survey and questionnaire is cost-effective and time efficient because of the small-sized group (Pribyl, 1994). Participants were given a short wellbeing survey (WEMWBS) before and after each snooker activity session. At the end of the eight weeks of snooker a focus group was held with unstructured and open questions asked in order to explore whether or not snooker has assisted in the participants holistic well-being. The questionnaire used at the beginning and end of each snooker activity was based upon the WEMWBS, which was developed by researchers at the Universities of Warwick and Edinburgh to facilitate the measuring of 'wellbeing' in adults.

The WEMWBS is considered a useful tool for the screening and monitoring of mental well-being in particular because of its positively worded items, which make the questionnaire acceptable by all users (Bianco, 2012). When carrying out the measurements of the WEMWBS scores from the participant's responses, certain statements were directly related to the snooker activity that the members were taking part in. These questions were indicated as 'I've been feeling optimistic about coming to play snooker', 'I've been dealing with the snooker activity well' and 'I've been feeling a sense of belonging when playing

snooker with the group'. Respondents were asked to indicate, before and after the snooker activity, how they felt about the snooker activity with responses ranging from 'none of the time', 'rarely', 'some of the time', 'often' and 'all of the time'. These were scored 1–5, respectively.

RESULTS

In terms of interpreting the results Tennant et al (2007), recommend that there should be a minimum of 50 participants to establish clear results for the WEMWBS scale. As this is a very small scale study with only six participants, the results will be simplified to best represent the outcome of the study. The WEMWBS scores have also been explained and the findings will be tabled and illustrated appropriately to best interpret the findings of the results. Of the participants in this small scale study, two were female and four were male. The zero scores indicate absence from the snooker activity session; this was due to the participants' personal circumstances. Participants are indicated as P1, P2, P3, P4, P5 and P6 in the presented results. It is also worth noting that participant (P6) started the study at the halfway point.

As for gender differences when examining the variances between the male and female participants, two significant gender patterns emerged in association to the sessions before and after the snooker activity and the responses to the wellbeing scores. Results taken from both genders before the snooker activity, Figure 1 and 2 shows that the two female participants felt fairly positive before and after the snooker sessions, both having reactively high scores above 60 marks. Figure 1 shows the well-being (WEMWBS) scores for the female participants before the snooker activity, though the scores for zero denotes to the week that the participants were unable to attend the session, for the week that they took part in the snooker study, the overall scores ranged between 39–64 marks out of 70. Figure 2 shows the wellbeing (WEMWBS) scores for the female participants after the snooker activity, though the scores for zero denotes to the week that the participants were unable to attend the session, for the week that they did the overall scores ranged between 49–68 marks out of 70. These scores indicate that the snooker activity had made a positive contribution to the female participants overall well-being.

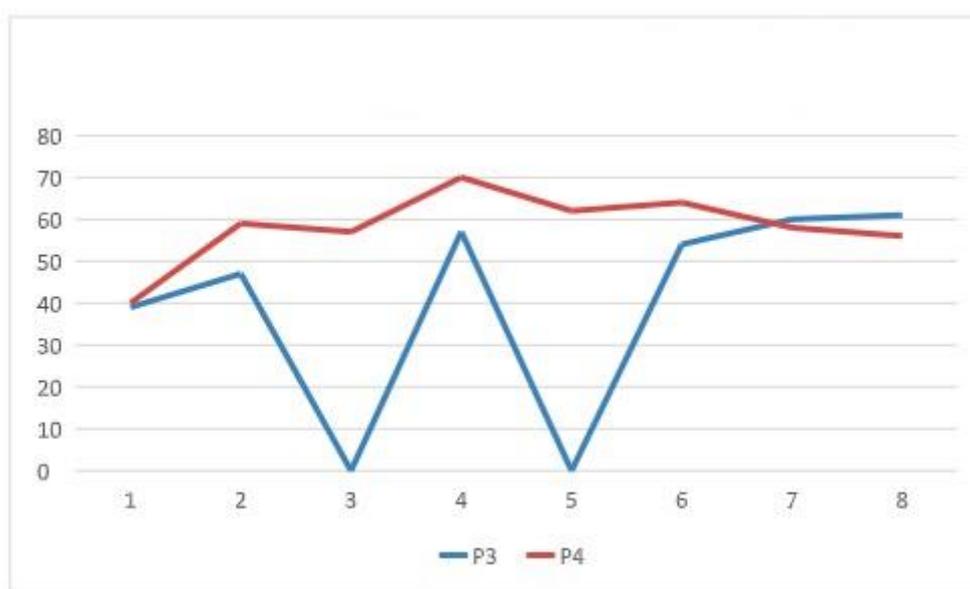


Figure 1. Female WEMWBS scores before the snooker activity.

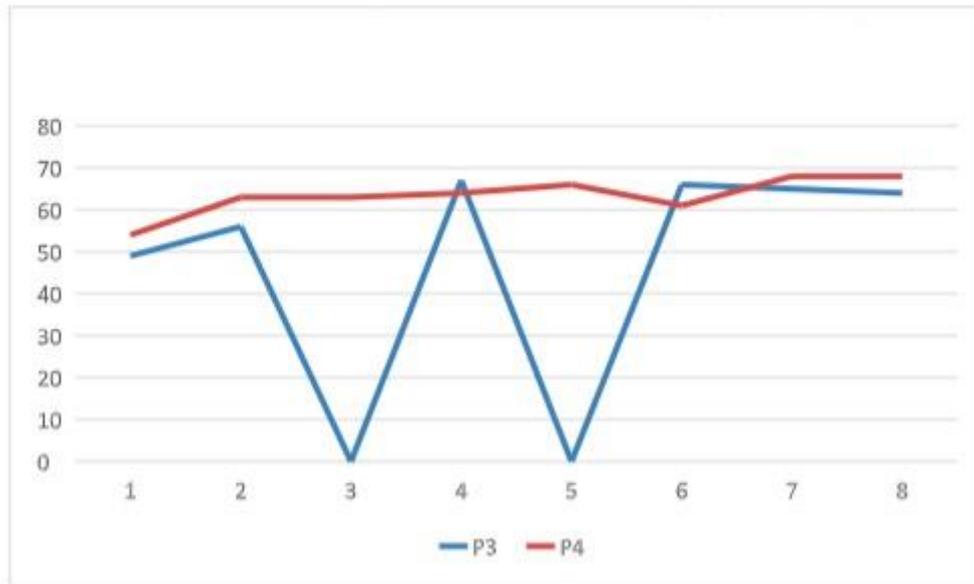


Figure 2. Female WEMWBS scores after the snooker activity.

As for the second section of gender scores for the WEMWBS questionnaire, Figure 3 shows the scores that the four male participants for the snooker activity over eight weeks scored between 36–61, out of 70. This also shows that participant six (P6), though P6 started the study late, seemed to have grown in well-being though the latter weeks of the snooker activity. However, what was significant is that all participants had grown immensely in their well-being status after partaking in the snooker activity. In Figure 4, the WEMWBS scores ranged from 46–63 out of 70. This showed a significant improvement in overall wellbeing post the snooker activity.

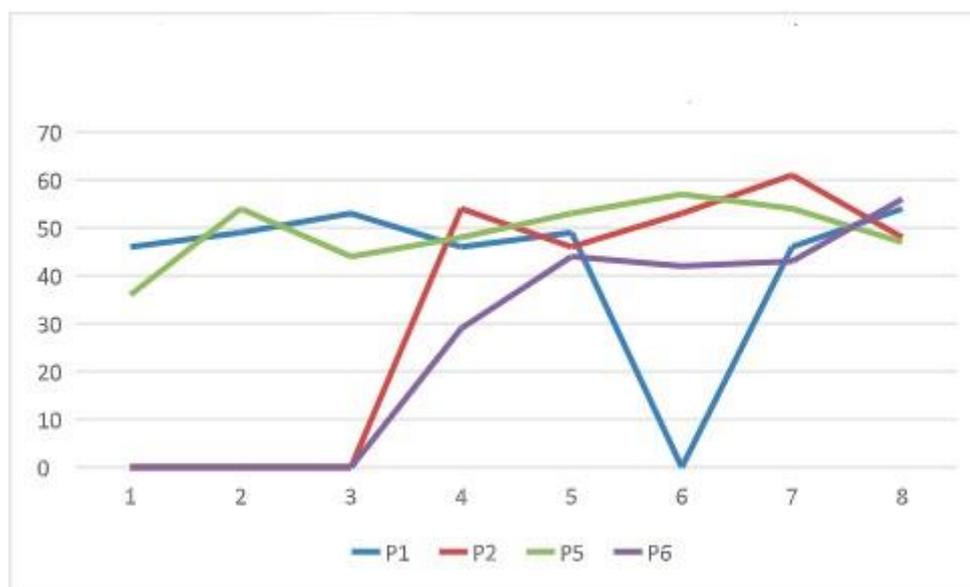


Figure 3. Male WEMWBS scores before the snooker activity.

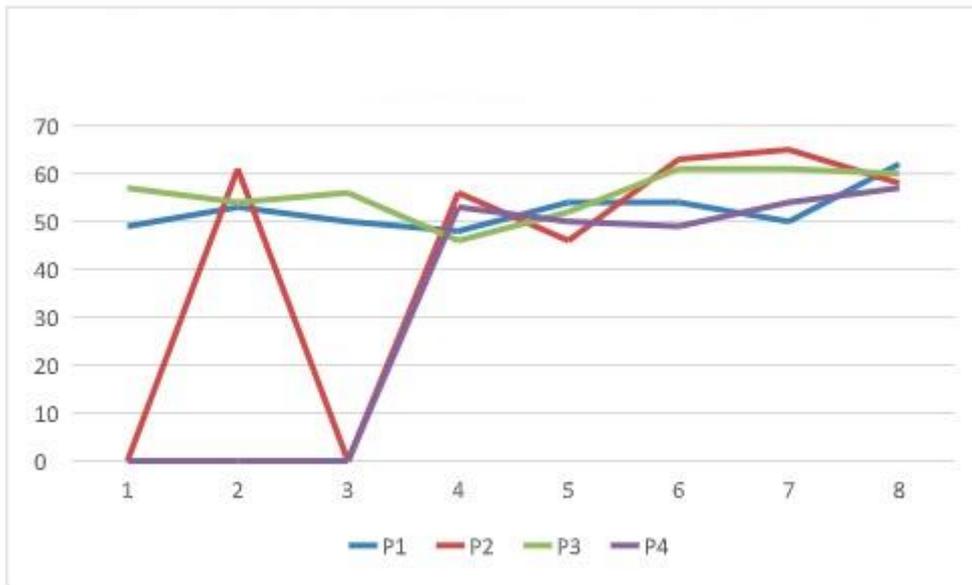


Figure 4. Male WEMWBS scores after the snooker activity.

By combining both genders and looking at the overall group's WEMWBS scores Figure 5 shows the scores over the eight weeks of the snooker activity. What is significant about the pattern of scoring is that it showed an increase of well-being from week 6–8 for participants taking part before and after the snooker activity. The scores in Figure 6 also indicate that the levels of wellbeing were in the higher scoring ranges averaging above 50 for the participants that had carried out the snooker activity for more than five weeks. This suggests that participants may have felt a sense of belonging when playing snooker in the group, or indeed grown closer to their peer group, as well as feeling more confident and relaxed about the snooker activity.

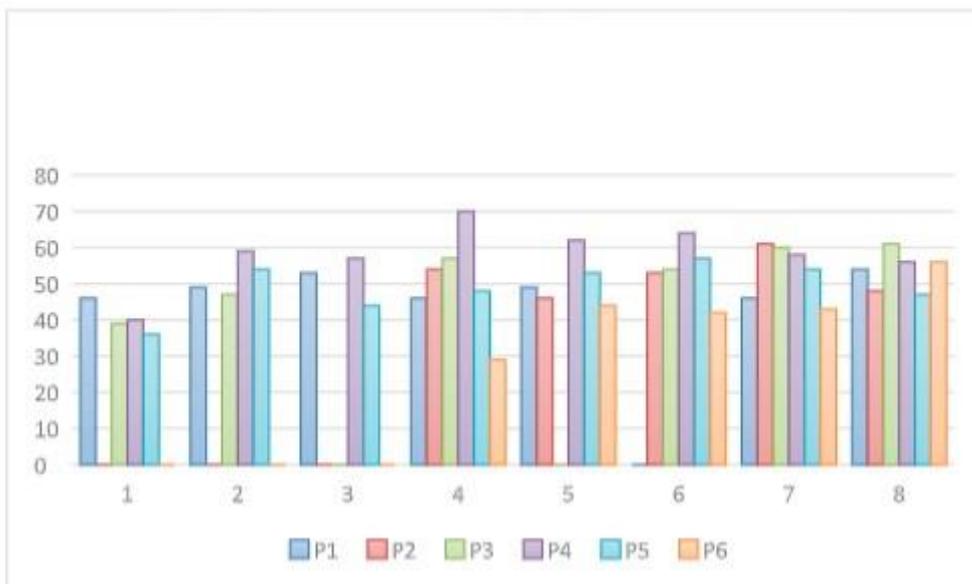


Figure 5. Overall WEMWBS scores for all participants before the snooker activity for 8 weeks.

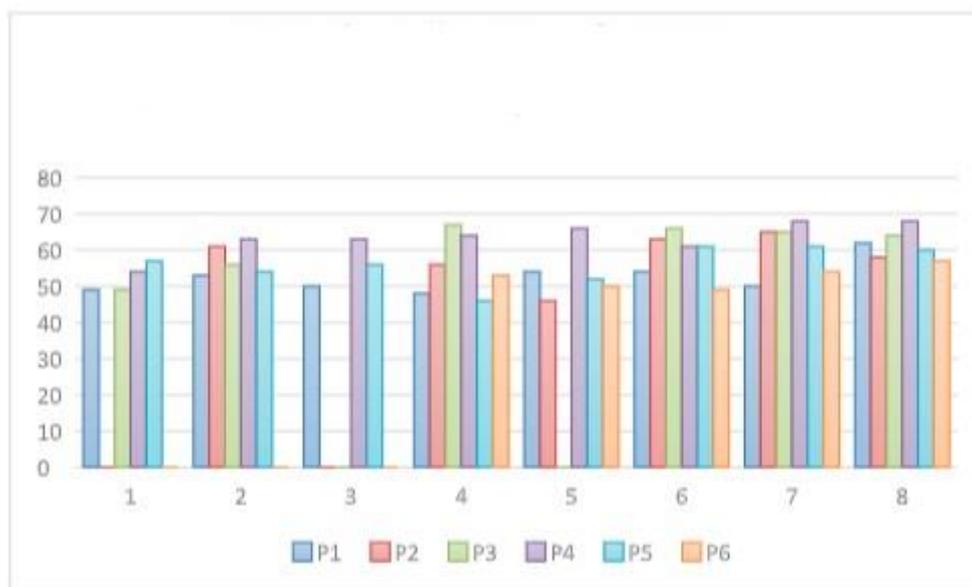


Figure 6. Overall WEMWBS scores for all participants after the snooker activity for 8 weeks.

When exploring the WEMWBS questions that were specifically related to snooker, results indicated an increase in wellbeing when asked the question 'I've been feeling a sense of belonging when playing snooker in the group. The WEMWBS scores ranged from 'some of the time', 'often' to 'all of the time' for the first few weeks, however in the last two weeks of the snooker activity, the scores for all participants were expressed as 'all of the time'.

Participants were also asked the following questions as part of a focus group at the end of the snooker activity, the responses were the following:

1. Do you think you have enjoyed the snooker activity, and could you give reasons why?

'Yes, definitely, it was good to come along and meet people, different people and get to know them for the period of the last seven weeks, as well as actually trying to play snooker.'

I think for me it's making yourself do something that you wouldn't normally do, but this is something that I have wanted to do. Even if I've had a bad this [snooker activity], which I've plenty of, you still come back for another go and now this is something I look forward to.

When I first started, I'd wake up in the morning and think 'I've got that snooker thing this afternoon. Today [the final day of the activity], I woke up and I was looking forward to coming down. It's not just, "Oh I've got this in my diary", and we've [the group] become very friendly, so it's nice to come and meet people.'

2. Do you think that taking part in the snooker activity has benefitted any part of your life?

Group response: *Yes*

Yes, you meet people. Doing this is something that gets you out too.

It's about developing a new skill, something that hadn't dreamt I'd ever, ever attempt in my entire life and kept at it and I intend to carry on at attempting it [snooker].

3. Do you feel that there is a social opportunity in taking part in the snooker activity?

Group response: *Yes, definitely.*

In what way?

We wouldn't have knowledge each other, until we came here [Twyford Snooker Club]. It's only two hours per week and if you think about it, it's not every other evening or weekend; it's just that little part of the week.

4. Would it be beneficial to have this snooker activity a little more during the week e.g., twice a week?

It might be once you've passed that initial 2 or 3 weeks in, so you've got more time as you get nervous when you first starting the course.

Another problem is committing to the day of the week that I'm not committed to something already; it's about time for the activity for me.

5. Do you think you'll continue to play snooker as pastime in the future?

Id' certainly like to.

If the opportunity presents itself, it not the case of a fixed commitment, but it could be taken on when it suits you.

I think probably, I would be interested but as a continuation of this activity as we've started something in the hope of making this regular.

6. Do you think [playing] snooker has made you feel more relaxed, with both the activity and outside of the activity?

Not particularly, I'm retired so I don't have the stress that all the other people may have.

As we're all retired.

I don't know if I feel more relaxed, but in a different way, in an opposite way, its [snooker] has added another structure to my week. It good to have something that structure the week that has not structure, which is a good thing for me, something that I like.

This last month and a half have been very stressful with family problems, but what I will say is that I was stressed a few weeks ago but I would have been more stressed if I didn't come here once a week [to the snooker activity].

In my case, my wife died earlier this year, so it's been a difficult time, this [the snooker activity] a good relaxing breakaway from the things that one has to deal with in that situation.

To me, while I agree with what everyone else has said, one of the things that I found very helpful from this group is that I recognise the impact of having a structured session [of snooker] with a very good leader [snooker coach] who knows the appropriate strategy for our circumstances. This is significant feature of this research that it isn't free for all, it's structured and positive, and encouraging and all the

good things. And snooker is not a trivial matter; it requires skill, so thank you to everyone within this research.

The [Snooker coach] has greatly added to the enjoyment of the snooker activity. Without his constructive leadership the snooker activity or indeed the study would not have taken place.

These results show a range of emotive answers to the questions posed by the researcher. All six questions conjured up an array of responses from the participants that were expressed by their thoughts, feelings and experiences of taking part in the snooker activity over the period of eight weeks. We will now be discussing the findings of the research using the results obtained from the WEMWBS scores and the focus group discussion.

DISCUSSION

The most paramount aim of this investigation was to measure the well-being of older people when actively playing snooker and to ascertain whether the snooker activity had contributed to the older person's wellbeing. The WEMWBS questionnaire proved very useful in delivering not only the measurements for overall well-being, but also measurements that were specifically related to the questions asked about the well-being of the snooker activity that the participants had taken part in. The study provided a very small sample of participants directly from the Age UK organisation and the results of the WEMWBS were in agreement with our initial research aim that playing snooker could positively contribute to the older person's well-being. The WEMWBS scores detected a gradual increase in happiness and enjoyment from the snooker activity over the eight weeks of its provision particularly in the last two weeks of the snooker activity. The WEMWBS questionnaire demonstrated what best described the older person's experiences, feeling and emotions before and after playing the snooker activity.

It was very important to capture the feelings and emotions of the participants before and after the snooker activity, as it helped to establish how participants were feeling before they arrived at the snooker hall. What was most interesting was the differences between the positive and negative social effects that participants had experienced in their lives, which had an effect on how they felt during and after the end of the snooker activity. For the weeks that some participants were not able to engage in the snooker activity, one participant reported that they had attended a funeral; another reported family engagements, or requiring caring for a friend or family member. Another participant stated that playing snooker was the ideal activity that enabled him to break away from his normal routines, especially after tragically losing a partner. This can only suggest that playing sport, such as snooker or indeed engaging in snooker as a leisurely activity can assist in bringing older people out of their homes into a socially engaging environment alongside their peers. It has been suggested that there is a decrease in social activities when a spouse has passed away and that reintroducing leisure and social activities with support, can help to improve social integration for those who live alone (Rosenwax, Malajczuk, & Ciccarelli, 2014).

Cummings (2015) makes an interesting observation about snooker in terms of the game being kind to one's well-being. He states, in his article, that snooker can be perceived as a hobby sport with a meditative aspect that alleviates one of any concerns that an individual may be experiencing. Sagoo (2017) supports this notion of snooker alleviating any mental health stress and anxiety from the outcomes of his study exploring how snooker, as an everyday game, can be used as a health promotional tool in supporting to improve one's mental health. With this borne in mind, introducing snooker as a positive well-being activity, is the first step in trying something new in collaboration with Age UK and the WPBSA. Hence, this research possibly paves the way for encouraging active engagement through snooker for older

people and tries to ascertain whether this is beneficial for their individual well-being. Most importantly, it helps to build active social contact as part of an older person's routine.

A host of literature points towards improving well-being in older people's lives, coupled with strategies to promote enjoyment and maintaining and improving an active happier lifestyle, which was an important factor that is sometimes overlooked when facing trauma or significant life events that hinder the pleasures of life. Contrary to certain beliefs, old age can sometimes be stressful and have an impact on an individual (Orrell & Davies, 2009). Meanwhile, Morgan and Kunkel (2016) explore the dimensions of ageing alongside its view in society during that part of an individual's life course. In their book, they explain how older people are growing in population across countries in the world; in turn older people are becoming more visible which brings about the challenges of maintaining their holistic health and well-being. It can be said that there is a degree of physical difference between older people who are 65 years to those who are 95 years, in terms of the level of assistance required. With this said, the age and level of independence of an individual can be a contributing factor to how older people can take part in social activities as well their daily activities of living. Within this study, there was a slight bias towards to choosing participants that were able to be freely mobile around a snooker table. Nevertheless, the older generation remain a strong social force and it is evident from this study that the small number of participants has resulted in saying that they have 'definitely' enjoyed and benefitted from the snooker activity. Therefore it can be assumed that playing snooker had positively contributed to the group of older person's well-being.

It was intriguing to have witnessed seeing the social force and cohesion of the group of the participants over the eight weeks of the snooker activity. The participants had recognised the benefits of being active, the extra exercise and the social integration from the snooker activities. It has been suggested that participation in sport for older people has the potential for positive development in all aspects of an older person's life (Baker, Meisner, Logan, Kungl, & Weir, 2009). While playing sports largely applies to younger people, it should not be frowned upon when older people intend to take up sport late in life. Lassen (2014) suggests that playing sports, such as billiards, is key in the active ageing process and should be used a health and social care tool for older people. Sagoo (2017) supports the idea of twinning health and snooker together by suggesting that snooker can also be used as a health promotional activity to develop positive mental health and well-being, suggesting that both sports and well-being are attributing factors in maintaining an older person's well-being.

There were further suggestions that the snooker activity proved to be successful in improving the participant's wellbeing over the latter half of the period of the study, in particular the last three weeks. Lassen (2014) supports a similar viewpoint as Fox and colleagues (2007) by suggesting that when older people participate in sport it is beyond a physical object. Playing sport in the latter years of one's life is also about being able to feel, think and reflect on one's holistic functional capacity, rather than being deterred by any physical restrictions. It can be said that this is very important when it comes to playing such a sport as snooker. Sagoo (2017) makes this case for snooker not being physically strenuous and limits the demands on the physical body. However, snooker does use thoughts, feelings and mental cognition throughout play. In some respects this reduces the stigma attached to sport being physically demanding. Fox and colleagues (2007) suggests that this notion of the physically demand is sometimes a deterrent for older people to participate in sport. Hence snooker could be an option that is seen as lesser physically demanding and more of an enjoyable leisurely pursuit for older people.

What was particularly significant was the fact that snooker was enjoyed by both genders, especially females. With this view, the WPBSA could consider introducing snooker activities to both genders of older people. What was notably helpful was the coaching sessions, this enabled the older people to learn about the game as well as participate in playing, thus making a positive impact on their holistic wellbeing and cognitive development. A snooker study conducted by Sagoo (2017) points towards the

knowledge of snooker stemming from the rules, regulations and definitions of the game. As the sessions of snooker that the participants took part in were mostly structured, this enabled them to learn the basics of the game. Therefore, when the participants acquired their learning of the game through what was being either being taught or what they had seen this suggested that those actions of learning attributed to their cognitive development or increased their development as part of learning a new skill or set of skills. This was especially so for the participants that has never played snooker.

What is noteworthy is the sense of belonging that the participants had as a group and playing snooker as an activity. This would tie in with Warr et al's (2009) findings that different types of activities improve the overall well-being of older people between the age ranges of 50–74 years in a positive way. However, the findings of this study exceed the age range. Nevertheless, taking into account all the different variations of thoughts and feelings in the WEMWBS scores for the 14 questions that were asked, the association between the snooker activity and participants well-being were found to be, on the whole, considerably positive. It can also be suggested the snooker coach who led the activity, would have some positive influence over the course of the snooker activity but the questions asked in the WEMWBS were specific to wellbeing. As this was small scale study with only six participants the likelihood of the increase in positive well-being may have stemmed from the snooker coaching support, this is coupled with the fact that wellbeing scores at the beginning or before the snooker activity were generally high, thus creating a stronger involvement in the snooker activity. Nevertheless, Longino and Kart (1982, in Warr et al., 2004) suggests that solitary activities can also be satisfying for the older person, so as snooker could be deemed as a solitary activity (Sagoo, 2017), when one is actively playing on the snooker table, this could be seen as satisfyingly relaxing.

Several limitations could be found in this study, the most fundamental one being the very small volume of participants that took part in this study. There was no denying that this was presented as a small scale study, therefore any further studies would require a larger cohort of older people. In addition, a criticism would be to have explored this study in-depth in relation to the areas of mental health, specifically targeting areas such as stress and anxiety but as a control would this be ethically questionable. There was also limited research with older people in sport, specifically snooker or aiming sports but this was compromised by researching literature around picking on the literature that best fit the umbrella of well-being and sports in general for older people. An additional limitation was noted from the participants, that there were copious amounts of form filling with the pre and post snooker activity WEMWBS questionnaire. Maybe this could have been explored differently if the study was repeated with a larger volume of participants. Nevertheless, it was vital the WEMWBS scores were used to attain feelings of thoughts and experiences of the participants at the many points of measuring their well-being. This, in turn, contributed to a robust field of research.

CONCLUSION

This evaluative investigation into whether snooker can be beneficial for older people's well-being clearly indicates that there is some truth to that assertion. From the scores and data collected from the WEMWBS results coupled with the focus group discussion, it is apparent that older people enjoyed the social participation and engagement of playing snooker. The question remains whether this can be mimicked to other activities or leisurely pursuits; previous research certainly indicates that this notion could be plausible. As for the study, there are many promising results that promote snooker as a leisurely activity for older people. The results have also indicated an improvement in older people's well-being over the course of the snooker activity. Nearly all participants expressed their happiness and enjoyment before, after and during the project. This signifies that playing snooker can indeed be made an important factor in developing social integration and improving older people's well-being and it would be a pleasure to see a greater proportion of the older population become engaged in snooker as an everyday activity. This notion of encouraging active participation in sport for older people is also in line

with Age UK's strategic plan for active engagement in various activities that promote holistic health and well-being for older people in every community.

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