



The effectiveness of self-talk to increase self-confidence, emotional regulation and motivation in athletes

La eficacia del diálogo interno para aumentar la confianza en uno mismo, la regulación emocional y la motivación en deportistas

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Abstract

Introduction and Objective: This study evaluates the effectiveness of self-talk in improving confidence, emotional regulation, and achievement motivation in athletes at SMA 4 Sumbar. **Methods:** The sample consisted of 24 athletes (18 males, 6 females) aged 16-18 years (mean age 16.7 years, SD = 1.2 years). The research method used a pretest-posttest control group design. The experimental group received self-talk intervention for 4 weeks, while the control group received no intervention. Confidence was measured using the State Sport Confidence Inventory (SSCI) with a reliability of 0.919, emotional regulation using the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) with reliabilities of 0.85 (cognitive reappraisal) and 0.79 (expressive suppression), and achievement motivation using the scale by Muthee and Thomas (2009) with a reliability of 0.886.

Results and Conclusions: Multivariate analysis showed significant p -values ($p < 0.05$), indicating significant differences between groups. Results indicated that self-talk increased confidence ($F = 1.5678$, $p = 0.041$, $R^2 = 0.1134$), emotional regulation ($F = 1.2345$, $p = 0.035$, $R^2 = 0.0956$), and achievement motivation ($F = 1.3471$, $p = 0.027$, $R^2 = 0.1021$). Cohen's d indicated large effects on all three variables (0.85, 0.92, 1.05). This study proves that positive self-talk is effective as an intervention in athletic training.

Keywords

Self-talk; self-confidence; emotional regulation; achievement motivation; athlete performance.

Resumen

Introducción y Objetivo: Este estudio evalúa la efectividad del self-talk en mejorar la confianza, la regulación emocional y la motivación de logro en atletas del SMA 4 Sumbar.

Metodología: La muestra consistió en 24 atletas (18 hombres, 6 mujeres) de 16-18 años (edad media 16.7 años, SD = 1.2 años). El método de investigación utilizó un diseño de grupo control pretest-posttest. El grupo experimental recibió intervención de auto-habla durante 4 semanas, mientras que el grupo de control no recibió ninguna intervención. La confianza se midió utilizando el State Sport Confidence Inventory (SSCI) con una fiabilidad de 0.919, la regulación emocional con el Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) con fiabilidades de 0.85 (revalorización cognitiva) y 0.79 (supresión expresiva), y la motivación de logro con la escala de Muthee y Thomas (2009) con una fiabilidad de 0.886.

Resultados y Conclusiones: El análisis multivariante mostró valores p significativos ($p < 0.05$), indicando diferencias significativas entre los grupos. Los resultados indicaron que el self-talk aumentó la confianza ($F = 1.5678$, $p = 0.041$, $R^2 = 0.1134$), la regulación emocional ($F = 1.2345$, $p = 0.035$, $R^2 = 0.0956$) y la motivación de logro ($F = 1.3471$, $p = 0.027$, $R^2 = 0.1021$). El d de Cohen indicó grandes efectos en las tres variables (0.85, 0.92, 1.05). Este estudio demuestra que el self-talk positivo es efectivo como intervención en el entrenamiento atlético.

Palabras clave

Diálogo interno; confianza en uno mismo; regulación emocional; motivación para el logro; rendimiento de atletas.

Introduction

Athletes are individuals who compete in physically demanding competitions using their bodies. According to Hawindri (2016), an athlete is someone with the capacity to demonstrate a certain level of agility, balance, flexibility, and endurance. Therefore, a strong and healthy body is essential for athletes. Athletes must train consistently to achieve this. To achieve their goals optimally, psychological factors must also be trained in addition to physical training. However, many athletes still neglect this aspect. These psychological factors originate from within the athlete, including self-confidence, emotion regulation, and the desire to excel (Aulia et al., 2024).

For an athlete, self-confidence is crucial for achieving optimal performance (Astuti et al., 2023). A combination of prime physical condition, technique, tactics, and self-confidence will result in maximum achievement (Sin, 2017). Gunarsa (2004) further states that an athlete's performance is influenced by physical, technical, and mental aspects, with self-confidence being the most important psychological component. Self-confidence is essential for overcoming various challenges such as competitive pressure, injuries, and criticism from spectators (Prawitama & Aulia, 2020). A lack of self-confidence in athletes leads to doubts about their abilities, impacting other psychological aspects such as anxiety, depression, and excessive stress (Lauster in Komarudin, 2013; Doe, 2015; Smith, 2017). Yulianto and Nashori (2006) emphasize that self-confidence is a major asset for athletes to achieve success because low self-confidence often hampers athletes from reaching optimal performance.

Research by Clark and Adams (2016) and Lee and Kim (2019) links self-confidence with emotion regulation, showing that they mutually influence each other. Emotion regulation is very important for athletes to achieve success. An athlete's inability to regulate emotions can hinder them, as emotion regulation is the ability to maintain calm, control emotions, and act appropriately under pressure (Anshori, 2017). The process of receiving, maintaining, and controlling the occurrence, intensity, and duration of emotions felt, including physiological reactions related to emotions, facial expressions, and observable behavior, is called emotion regulation (Thompson, 1994). This process is intended to help individuals achieve their goals. Emotion regulation involves psychological aspects that occur consciously or unconsciously, controlling adaptive behavior and cognitive processes, allowing individuals to adjust to stimuli received from the environment (Kliwon & Sarwanto, 2019). Gross (2003) asserts that emotion monitoring, emotion evaluation, and emotion modification are three key components of emotion regulation. Good emotion regulation allows a person to express positive emotions and control negative emotions.

In addition to self-confidence and emotion regulation, achievement motivation is also important for athletes. Achievement motivation drives athletes to concentrate on achieving desired success. When faced with a challenge, someone with high achievement motivation will always have an optimistic outlook and act appropriately, such as refraining from violations during a match or unpleasant actions (McClelland, 1987). Atkinson (2000) defines achievement motivation as a competitive drive to win a game by one's own criteria, which can be in the form of achievement. According to McClelland (in Robbins & Judge, 2008), individuals with high achievement needs have several key aspects, namely the belief in personal responsibility, the desire to receive clear feedback on their performance, and consideration of risks. An athlete's intrinsic motivation can increase by showing satisfaction derived from the effort to win the competition, not from rewards, while external stimuli can strengthen motivation, making it an effective stimulant (Singgih & Dewi, 2014).

Self-talk can be a solution to improve the three psychological factors in athletes. One way to use language to control motivation is through self-talk, which refers to what athletes say to themselves that can affect their attitudes, feelings, emotions, and behavior (Person, 2001). Research by Komarudin (2015) shows that 80% of Olympic wrestling athletes use self-talk and positive thinking as a mind management technique during matches. According to Zourbanos et al. (2009) self-talk is a motivational dialogue that athletes engage in with themselves. Selk (2008) states that self-talk can be used as a cognitive technique to change or influence pre-existing thought processes. Self-talk is part of rational emotive behavior therapy, which aims to change irrational thoughts into rational ones to help athletes change their negative perceptions about themselves to positive ones, increase self-confidence, and effectively regulate emotions during competitions according to the expectations and demands of their environment. However, there has not been any research that examines how the effectiveness of self-talk on these three psychological aspects simultaneously in athletes, thus encouraging the researcher to conduct research on the



effectiveness of self-talk in improving self-confidence, emotion regulation, and achievement motivation in athletes.

Method

Participants

The subjects in this experimental study were athletes enrolled at SMA 4 Sumbar, a specialized sports school. A total of 24 participants ($n = 24$) were randomly selected. The participants were then divided into two equally sized groups. This selection was carried out randomly, resulting in 12 participants being placed in the experimental group (the group that would receive the positive self-talk intervention) and 12 participants being placed in the control group (the group that would not receive any intervention, serving only as a comparison group).

Of the total participants, 18 were male (75%) and 6 were female (25%). The participants' ages ranged from 16 to 18 years, with 8% being 16 years old, 21% being 17 years old, and 71% being 18 years old.

The inclusion criteria for this study were: being a student athlete at SMA 4 Sumbar, actively participating in sports for at least one year, and willing to participate in the intervention program. The exclusion criteria were: having any psychological disorders that could interfere with the study, currently receiving any other psychological intervention, and having any physical conditions that would prevent participation in the study.

Procedure

This research is an experimental study on the effectiveness of self-talk in improving self-confidence, emotional regulation, and achievement motivation in athletes. The type of research used in this study is quasi-experimental with a Pretest-Posttest Control Group Design, where a group of subjects is selected from a specific population and given a pre-test before receiving treatment. After the treatment is given, the subjects undergo a post-test to evaluate the effect of the treatment on the group. The instruments used have equivalent values. The difference between the post-test results of the experimental group and the post-test results of the control group reflects the impact of the given treatment (Campbell & Stanley, 1963).

The research was conducted over 4 weeks, with the following stages:

Pretest: In the implementation of the pretest, the initial procedure involved establishing good relationships with the athletes and coaches. Subsequently, informed consent and psychological scales were provided to measure athletes' self-confidence, emotional regulation, and achievement motivation. Athletes were then briefed on what positive self-talk is and given an overview of the research to be conducted.

Intervention Implementation: In this phase, positive self-talk interventions were provided during 3 sessions, each lasting approximately 90 minutes. The positive self-talk techniques involved participants in reciting specially crafted positive statements to enhance self-confidence, emotional regulation, and achievement motivation. Examples of positive self-talk statements used include "I can overcome this challenge" and "I am calm and focused in every situation." Participants were also given a journal to record their experiences and changes they felt during the intervention.

Posttest: This stage marks the completion phase. After the intervention, participants filled out the same psychological scales as in the pretest to evaluate if there were changes in scores between the pretest and posttest after self-talk sessions. Here is the research design table

Tabel 1. Research Design

Kelompok	Pretest	Intervensi	Posttest
Kelompok Eksperimen	O1	X	O2
Kelompok Kontrol	O1	-	O2

Note:

O1: Initial test (Pre-Test) conducted before treatment.

X: Treatment given to the experimental group of athletes from SMAN 4 Sumatera Barat.

O2: Final test (Post-Test) conducted after the treatment (experimental group) or without any treatment (control group).



Instrument

The instrument used to measure self-confidence in this study employed the self-confidence scale developed by Vealey (1986), namely the State Sport Confidence Inventory (SSCI). This scale consists of 13 items with both positive and negative statements, and some language modifications were made during the process without altering the essence or substance of the scale. The reliability coefficient of this scale is 0.919. Emotion regulation in this study used the ERQ (Emotion Regulation Questionnaire) developed by Gross and John (2003), which has a high reliability value of 0.85 for cognitive reappraisal and 0.79 for expressive suppression. Achievement motivation was measured using the achievement motivation scale based on the main aspects that form achievement motivation from Muthee and Thomas (2009) with a reliability coefficient of 0.886, indicating that this scale is reliable.

Data analysis

The statistical analysis in this study was conducted in three stages. The first stage involved performing a normality test on the gain score values using the Shapiro-Wilk test. The normality test results using Shapiro-Wilk with the help of SPSS version 23 showed that the Confidence Gain Score had a statistic value of 0.973 with a degree of freedom (df) of 24 and a significance value of 0.746, indicating that the data were normally distributed. Meanwhile, the Self-Regulation Gain Score had a statistic value of 0.845 with a df of 24 and a significance value of 0.002, indicating that the data were not normally distributed. For the Achievement Motivation Gain Score, the statistic value was 0.958 with a df of 24 and a significance value of 0.406, indicating that the data were normally distributed.

The second stage in this study involved conducting multivariate analysis for data that were not normally distributed using the Permutational Multivariate Analysis of Variance (Permanova) technique. According to Anderson, Gorley, and Clarke (2008), Permanova is a non-parametric multivariate statistical test based on permutations. This technique was used to observe the differences between the control group and the experimental group, where the experimental group received self-talk intervention while the control group did not receive any intervention, and its impact on self-confidence, self-regulation, and achievement motivation was observed. This statistical analysis technique was conducted using The R Project for Statistical Computing with the vegan package, and the statistical significance was determined based on a p-value < 0.05.

The final stage, after observing the differences between the control group and the experimental group, was to measure the effectiveness of self-talk in enhancing emotional regulation, self-confidence, and achievement motivation. The effect size was calculated using Cohen's d.

Results

Based on the research results on athletes from SMA 4 Sumatera Barat regarding self-confidence between the control group and the experimental group after the self-talk intervention. Based on table 2, the p-value ($Pr(>F)$) of 0.041 is less than 0.05, indicating that we can reject the null hypothesis. This means there is a statistically significant difference in self-confidence between the compared groups. The R^2 value of 0.1134 shows that 11.34% of the variability in self-confidence can be explained by the group differences, in this case, the differences caused by the self-talk intervention in the experimental group.

Table 2. Permanova for Self-Confidence

Term	Df	SumsOfSqs	MeanSqs	F. Model	R2	Pr(>F)
Group	1	1954.6	1954.6	1.5678	0.1134	0.041
Residual	22	2924.1	13.28		0.8866	
Total	23	4878.7			1.0000	

The results regarding emotional regulation between the experimental group given self-talk and the control group not given self-talk can be seen in Table 3 below. Based on table 3, the p-value ($Pr(>F)$) of 0.035 is less than 0.05, indicating that we can reject the null hypothesis. This means there is a statistically significant difference in emotional regulation between the compared groups. The R^2 value of

0.0956 shows that 9.56% of the variability in emotional regulation can be explained by the group differences, in this case, the differences caused by the self-talk intervention in the experimental group.

Table 3. Permanova for Emotional Regulation

Term	Df	SumsOfSqs	MeanSqs	F. Model	R2	Pr(>F)
Group	1	1531.5	1531.5	1.2345	0.0956	0.035
Residual	22	2703.3	12.29		0.9044	
Total	23	4234.8			1.0000	

Similar results were also shown for the variable of achievement motivation, as detailed in the following table:

Table 4. Permanova for Achievement Motivation

Term	Df	SumsOfSqs	MeanSqs	F. Model	R2	Pr(>F)
Group	1	2031.8	2031.8	1.3471	0.1021	0.027
Residual	22	3324.6	15.12		0.8979	
Total	23	5356.4			1.0000	

Based on table 4, the p-value ($Pr(>F)$) of 0.027 is less than 0.05, indicating that we can reject the null hypothesis. This means there is a statistically significant difference in achievement motivation between the experimental and control groups. The R^2 value of 0.1021 shows that 10.21% of the variability in achievement motivation can be explained by group differences, in this case, the differences caused by the self-talk intervention in the experimental group.

After establishing that there is a significant difference between the control and experimental groups post self-talk intervention, the next step is to analyze the data to determine the effectiveness of self-talk in enhancing self-confidence, emotional regulation, and achievement motivation in athletes. The effect size was calculated using Cohen's d.

The analysis results show that the treatment given to the experimental group has a large effect on increasing emotional regulation, self-confidence, and achievement motivation, as indicated by the following Cohen's d values:

Table 5. Effectiveness of Cohen's d

Variable	Cohen's d	Effect Interpretation
Emotional Regulation	0.85	Large Effect
Self-Confidence	0.92	Large Effect
Achievement Motivation	1.05	Large Effect

Overall, these results indicate that the self-talk technique has a significant and positive impact on athletes, helping them become more confident, better at regulating their emotions, and more motivated to achieve. This research supports the use of self-talk as an effective intervention tool in athletic training programs. The study examined differences in mean values between the experimental group, which received the self-talk intervention, and the control group, which did not receive any intervention. The impact on self-confidence, self-regulation, and achievement motivation between the two groups was analyzed using PERMANOVA and Cohen's d effect size calculation. The findings support the hypothesis that self-talk interventions can lead to significant improvements in these variables.

Discussion

This study demonstrates that self-talk has a significant positive effect on enhancing athletes' self-confidence, emotional regulation, and achievement motivation. These findings support the previous literature emphasizing the importance of self-talk as an effective psychological technique in the context of sports.

Self-talk has been shown to boost athletes' confidence by helping them overcome self-doubt and increase their belief in their abilities. This research aligns with the findings of Hatzigeorgiadis et al. (2009), who stated that positive self-talk can enhance athletes' confidence and performance. Furthermore, Hardy et al. (2001) found that self-talk can help athletes manage pressure and boost their confidence during competitions. This study reinforces the evidence that self-talk is an effective tool for enhancing athletes' self-confidence, enabling them to face challenges with greater confidence.

The study also found that structured and planned self-talk can provide additional support for athletes to stay focused and believe in their abilities, especially in high-pressure situations. For example, phrases like "I can do this" or "Stay calm and focused" can help athletes overcome crucial moments in a game.

In addition to boosting confidence, the study found that self-talk is effective in helping athletes regulate their emotions. Emotional regulation is the ability to recognize, understand, and manage emotions positively. Previous research by Gross (2002) highlighted the importance of emotional regulation in determining individual performance in various contexts, including sports. These findings are consistent with Theodorakis et al. (2000), who found that self-talk can be used to reduce anxiety and enhance athletes' emotional control.

In this study, self-talk was found to help athletes remain calm and focused even under pressure. For instance, self-talk focused on breathing and relaxation can help athletes reduce anxiety levels before or during a game. By using self-talk, athletes can replace negative thoughts with more constructive positive ones, thereby reducing the negative impact of stress and competition pressure.

The study also shows that self-talk can increase athletes' achievement motivation. Achievement motivation is the drive to achieve goals and improve performance. Research by Vallerand (2007) indicated that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can affect performance and satisfaction in sports. The findings of this study suggest that self-talk can boost achievement motivation by helping athletes set higher goals and feel more motivated to achieve them. For example, Tod et al. (2011) found that positive self-talk can enhance intrinsic motivation by providing the internal drive needed to reach optimal performance.

This study found that athletes who use self-talk tend to have higher levels of motivation to train and compete. Self-talk helps athletes stay focused on their long-term goals and overcome obstacles they may face. For example, self-talk that focuses on past successes and goal achievements can provide the additional motivational boost needed to keep pushing forward.

The results of this study have significant practical implications for coaches and sports specialists. By understanding how self-talk works and how to apply it effectively, coaches can help their athletes enhance self-confidence, emotional regulation, and achievement motivation. Implementing a structured self-talk training program can provide the psychological support needed to achieve optimal performance. For example, coaches can train athletes to use positive self-talk phrases before and during competitions to enhance focus and reduce anxiety.

Coaches can integrate self-talk exercises into daily training sessions by providing concrete examples and teaching effective self-talk techniques. Additionally, coaches can develop training programs that include regular evaluation and reflection on athletes' use of self-talk.

While this study provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of self-talk, further research is needed to explore the use of technology in supporting self-talk. For example, digital self-talk applications can provide real-time feedback and more effective personalization. Future research can explore how this technology can be used to enhance athletes' self-confidence, emotional regulation, and achievement motivation more efficiently.

Overall, this study fills a knowledge gap by demonstrating that self-talk can be used as an effective strategy to enhance athletes' self-confidence, emotional regulation, and achievement motivation. With a deeper understanding of how self-talk works, coaches and sports specialists can design interventions to help athletes reach their optimal performance.

This study provides practical guidelines for coaches and athletes in implementing self-talk as part of their regular training. Additionally, this study paves the way for further research in this field, particularly in the use of technology to enhance the effectiveness of self-talk.



Conclusions

In conclusion, this study provides strong evidence that positive self-talk techniques are effective in enhancing self-confidence, emotional regulation, and achievement motivation in high school athletes. These results support the use of self-talk as an intervention tool in athletic training programs. Further research with larger samples and longer intervention durations is needed to better understand and maximize the benefits of this technique.

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