

# SELF-TALK AND PERFORMANCE: A CORRELATIONAL STUDY OF ELITE CRICKET PLAYERS

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**ABSTRACT:** *Self-talk is generally known as the study of sport psychology, to enhance the performance, to intensify the mood, and to improve the confidence. Athletes and coaches usually focus on self-talk to improve the performance in competition. Whereas the amount of conducted research is experimental in nature which emphasizes the functions of self-talk. This study stresses the connection of performance with self-talk. For this purpose, a sample of 130 elite cricketers was selected from the Pakistan cricket board and National Cricket Academy using two questionnaires. Automatic Self-talk Questionnaire for Sports (ASTQS) for self-talk and Self-Rating Scale of Athletic Performance was found to be reliable and consistent measures to be utilized in the study. This study has shown a significant positive correlation between performances with self-talk. where, Self-talk was found to be positively correlated with concentration, strength, endurance, motivation, mechanics, team cohesion. Aggression, Quickness, Agility, and fitness are negatively correlated. The batsman was found to be using more Self-talk as a mental strategy in order to elevate the performance as compared to bowlers and all Rounder. These results project the efficacy and efficiency in the cricket performance, overall self-talk can be used as an effective and facilitative psychological skill to get the desired outcomes and performance in the sports field.*

**Keywords:** Self-talk, Performance, Cricketers, and Correlation.

## INTRODUCTION

Most of the time, people talk to themselves, in this way, they ask questions, express feelings, or give instructions. It is not only referred as self-talk but also discussed as self-instruction, verbal cues, covert speech, and inner dialogue [1]. The idea of self-talk can be traced back from the fundamental principles which were used by the cognitive-behavioral therapists, aimed to change the thoughts, behaviors and interpretations of an individual. Hence, self-talk is practiced as a cognitive technique by athletes and players to stimulate their opinions, spirits, and performances in the form of automated statements [2] Self-talk interventions have become flourishing areas of most studied methods in the realm of sport psychology while a number of experimental researches have been done to prove its power and significance in dissimilar games [3]. To further understand the impact of self-talk, Hardy has indicated six features of self-talk's nature, *firstly* valance: positive or negative; *secondly* overtiness: overt or covert; *thirdly* self-determination: self-generated or assigned; *fourthly* motivational interpretation: motivating or demotivating; *fifthly* function: motivational or instructional; and *lastly* frequency. [4]

A number of studies have been concentrating on positive, negative and neutral self-talk. Mixed results have been found as negative or positive by showing countless benefits [5]. Hatzigeorgiadis et al. (2014) organized experimental research to measure the association between performances and self-talk. As 41 young swimmers took part in that study and the group was divided into control ( $n = 20$ ) and experimental ( $n = 21$ ) group. The experimental group was assigned to practice it in a training period of 8 weeks by utilizing multiple constructive motivational and instructional self-talk techniques. By the culmination of that experiment he summarized that it might be more effective in the multifaceted and unanticipated environment of competition. [2, 6]. To find out the impact another study on negative and positive self-talk was conducted on tennis players' and

positive self-talk did not show any kind of improved demonstration in the field; though negative self-talk projected a great amount of dropping performances [7]. These findings correspond with Hatzigeorgiadis and Biddle that a wide discrepancy between goal performance and actual performance generates more negative self-talk [5].

Several studies focus on psychological effects and variables of ST as well as the motor learning and performance. After studying and reviewing the previous literature and works on ST interferences, Kahrović, Radenković, Mavrić, and Murić [8] have concluded that "there are a sufficient number of studies that confirm the positive effects of self-talk", "improving self-confidence, as well as reducing anxiety in different kinds of sports". Some other researchers have reached on this conclusion that the application of positive and motivational ST may lead towards the reduction of stress and anxiety, known as cognitive anxiety. Tod et al. confirmed that ST lessens the effects of anxiety, as Hatzigeorgiadis, Zourbanos, Mpoumpaki, and Theodorakis did in a study which was incorporated by involving tennis players [9, 10]. Latinjak et al. analyzed the impact of various techniques of ST in anger-eliciting situations and anxiety to acquired a positive influence of ST in anxiety-eliciting than in anger-eliciting situations [11, 12].

Moreover, another remarkable qualitative study was also conducted on five elite cricket players during the competition by employing video footage. It revealed surprising results in cricket batting performances during the course of the competition. ST was used as part of pre-batting routines and continual narrative to decide the shot selection and anxiety during the performance. Furthermore, the acquired results indicated that ST is conspicuously used as an approach to neutralize the negative thoughts during the time period of declining performance [13].

A number of applied and theoretical researches have been helpful in the expansion of information on self-talk during the past decade. As we know the intervention of ST may enable athletes to perform better by using the inner voices in their

heads [14]. Cutton and Hearon (2014) have studied the use of dialogue technique of ST to inculcate elevated power which was speculated in exercise, training, and competition, whereas the drives of self-talk were exertion, emphasis on psychological and mental preparation, reduction of anxiety and techniques of self-reliance. Recently, goal-directed self-talk has been introduced as motivational and instructional technique which is not only self-determined as whole, but also planned during sports participation [15]. To measure the goal-directed self-talk technique, Latinjak *et al* has examined an elite orienteer during the contest. As six sessions were lead with the help of sport psychologists and orienteer arguing the goal-directed self-talk [14]. It studies the goal-directed of self-talk intrusions to enrich the performance via vicissitudes in moods and behavior of athletes by self-determined self-talk. Furthermore, the negativity in self-talk replaces positive self-talk and goal-directed self-talk replaces negative self-talk [6].

To summarize we can say that it can play a vital role in achieving better performances in athletic activities by improving the psychological mindset. It seems logical that different tasks may benefit more from different types of self-statements. The focus of contemporary research is to revise the link of positive self-talk on a sample of elite cricketers.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The current study was cross-sectional in nature. The data were collected from 130 elite cricketers using a simple random sampling technique. The data were collected from Pakistan Cricket Board and National Cricket Academy, using two valid and reliable questionnaires. Players were divided into three categories of Bowlers, Batsman and All-rounder. Self-talk was measured by a collection of statements developed by Zourbanos *et al.*, based on their latest competition ASTQS is asking respondents to ratio the feelings they had been usually experienced and which techniques were used consciously and intentionally to perform better [16]. Self-talk responses were made on a scale from 0 (Never), 1 (Rarely), 2(Sometimes), 3 (Often), and 4 (Very Often). Whereas, Sports performance was measured by the Self-Rating Scale of Athletic Performance wa advanced by Wolanin [17]. This scale of rating is a direct measure of physical performance and it adds variables of performance as strength, quickness competitiveness, concentration, fitness, motivation endurance, mechanics, aggressiveness, agility, and team cohesion. The participants were informed prior to

the study and consent was taken for participating in the research. Subjects were assured regarding the confidentiality of the information. Players were explained about the questionnaires and it took around 15-20 minutes for them to complete the questionnaire. After completion, collected data was fed into the SPSS version 23.0 for data analysis. Reliability analysis, Correlational analysis, and Analysis of Variance was done to draw the results of the study.

**NUMERICAL RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Results:** Table 1 shows the Cronbach's Alpha reliability for the scales of self-talk and Performance. These findings indicate that both the scales are reliable instruments for measuring the constructs of performance and self-talk. The overall reliability of both the scales was found to be 0.749 where the reliability of the Automatic self-talk questionnaire for sports ASTQS was found to be 0.778 whereas the reliability of the self-rating scale for Performance was found to be 0.618.

**Table-1:** Reliability of the variables

Variable	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Performance	10	0.618
Self-Talk	36	0.778
Overall	46	0.749

**Table-2:** Pearson Correlation between Self Talk and Performance. (N=130)

	Self-Talk	Performance
Self-Talk	1	.029** 0.000
Performance	.029** 0.000	1

\*\**p*<.01, \**p*<.05

Table 2 shows a correlation analysis of the variables which indicates the overall correlation between the variables. There was found to be a direct correlation amid self-talk and performance. Self- talk was found to be significantly positively correlated with a performance that is self-talk is a cognitive technique that facilitates the performance. Whereas, Table 2.2 shows the inter-correlations between self-talk with sub-scales of Performance. Self-talk was found to be positively correlated with concentration, strength, endurance, motivation, mechanics, and team cohesion where strength and motivation have a strong relationship as compared to others. On the other hand, Aggression, Quickness, Agility, and fitness are negatively correlated with a stronger negative relationship with Aggression and fitness.

**Table-3:** Inter-correlations between Self Talk and subscales of Performance. (N=130)

		Aggres sion	Concen tration	stren gth	endu rance	motiva tion	Quick ness	Agility	fitness	mecha nics	team cohesion
Self Talk	Value	-.353**	.164	.002**	.047*	.065**	-.010	-.107	-.141**	.016*	.024*
	Sig.	0.000	0.063	0.000	0.005	0.000	0.912	0.224	0.000	0.005	0.005

\*\**p*<.01, \**p*<.05

**Table-4:** One Way Analysis of Variance of self-talk with different categories of cricket players

	Bowlers (34)		Batsmen (46)		All Rounder (50)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Self -Talk	1.9065	0.26523	2.1243	0.38111	1.8821	0.46684

Table 3 shows the differences in the mean scores of cricketers belonging to different playing categories. The difference in the means of bowlers, batsman, and all-rounder indicated that batsmen are showing the highest score on ASTQS than the rest of the cricketers.

### DISCUSSION:

Self-talk is widely investigated, researched and applied in the sport psychology domain in an attempt to enhance athletic performances. It is a thought process in the mind of an athlete along with multiple reasons which are negatively influencing the results by disordering the approaches of research on it. It is known as the utilization by athletes amid in the setting of training and context [18].

This study aims to draw the link of ST with performance in a sample of 130 elite cricket players. This study had also been expected to draw conclusion in which the playing category is using more self-talk as strategy it incorporates mental exercise to uplift the performance. The analysis indicated that players perceived Self Talk as an influencing factor on the performance as positively and negatively. The results of the study revealed that Positivity in self-talk improved the performance not only in the mid of the contest but also as positive forecaster of aspired performance. The results of the study validate that ST creates a positive effect on the performance by enhancing the strength, endurance, motivation, mechanics, and team cohesion of the players. On the other hand, outcomes of this inquiry also put forward the notion that ST is creating interference in the quickness, agility, and fitness of the cricket players. Results also conclude that batsmen use the mental strategy of self-talk more as compared to bowlers and all-rounder.

These results were supported by other studies which were conducted on this topic as Players are determined to get the victory and ST could play a vital role in achieving success. Perez-Encinas *et al.* have emphasized on this point that training maximizes the effect [19]. Besides the dialogues in self-talking were examined to highlight the positive impact of it by swapping negative self-talking, it is acted as a self-regulatory system to empower elite athletes to be focused in the combat [11, 13, 15].

It is evident that diverse kinds of self-talk can influence differently on the performance and can be varied by application according to the contest and performance. Zinsser *et al.* have suggested that instructional self-talk is more beneficial to magnify the level of concentration and focus on the implementation. Whereas motivational self-talk has benefits for psyching-up and perseverance [20]. On the other hand, Theodorakis *et al.* claim that instructional self-talk can be more advantageous in fine tasks which require accurateness and exactness. Motivational self-talk can be positive and valuable for gross tasks which are demanding forte and fortitude. In the context of the previous effects, the results of the current study confirm that ST can be an impactful and effective performance-enhancing strategy. Another justification for the utility of Self-talk it enhances the performance by indirectly increasing the self-efficacy of the cricket players because performance and self-efficacy have bidirectional relationship which is signifying that it is a likable tool to develop self-efficacy [21].

Self-talk has been exploited to upgrade motivation, self-confidence, and attentiveness by decreasing the level of anxiety amongst the cricket players. Zaheer Abbas is a highly acclaimed former Pakistani Cricketer who ruled the world of cricket from 1969 to 1985. He is a renowned and exalted batsman who for the first time scored three consecutive centuries in one-day internationals, recognized as the Asian Bradman. He is considered as one of the best and finest batsmen in the glorious cricket history so far. In a discussion at the Pakistan Cricket Board revealed that he is among few professional cricketers who used to have Self Talk before his training sessions during his career. According to his point of view, "Self-Talk always enables me against stress, self-analysis and eliminates the fear of strong opponent".

The results of this research work suggest that Self-Talk intervention programs can be organized independently apart from physical training meetings or sessions to get comprehensive effectiveness. Though sessions must be directed in the proximity of physical training yet must be directly taken place previously or later of the physical training sessions of athletes. However, upcoming research work may explore the diverse sport or settings, ages, and experience levels to the extent of understanding of the phenomenon. Meanwhile, it is a technique that is practiced and experienced by anyone. Self-talk not only helps to impact the performance of cricket players proficiently, but also helps usually an individual and specifically an athlete according to the situations, which we generally experience and encounter often. Performance is not only related to the arenas of sports, but encompasses scholarly exams, sales presentations, or getting a job by a successful interview. Performance can be seen in our daily life and self-talk is utilized by all of us at the interpersonal level. This study emphasis on the significance of seeking the research problem as to how self-talk affects our performance and self-efficacy in any field of life.

### CONCLUSION

Altogether, these findings suggest that self-talk has important links with the performance of cricketers. Effective use of self-talk has established that it is done to improve performance by regulating the emotions and thoughts about an individual and the game. Positive self-talk can make a cricket player feel confident about himself and game, it increase focus by improving the mind and motor coordination of the players. In short, the present study highlighted the use of positive ST as a fluctuating continual narrative that enhanced skill acquisition, endurance, strength and team cohesion whilst enhancing the performance of cricket players. Specifically, players advocated ST by saying that, it narrowed their attentional focus and redirected their thoughts to performance-related cues during periods of declining performance. Convincingly, the most important aspect of ST is that it empowers a player reaching his required potential and copiously utilizing it.

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