



Application of Self-Talk Techniques to Enhance Self-Confidence among University Football Athletes

Farhanul Insan Zinda¹, Komarudin Komarudin², Mochamad Yamin Saputra^{3*}, Gerald Novian⁴, Siti Nursaba⁵

^{123*5} Study Program of Sport Coaching Education, Faculty of Sport and Health Education, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, West Java, Indonesia.

⁴ Sports Physical Coaching Study Program, Faculty of Sports and Health Education, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, West Java, Indonesia

Keywords

Soccer Athlete, Self-Talk, Self-Confidence

Abstract

In the sport of football, athletes often experience a decrease in self-confidence when facing match pressure or after making mistakes, such as failing in passing, losing the ball, or failing to score a goal. This condition can lead to a decline in the athlete's performance and hesitation in making decisions on the field. One psychological technique to overcome this problem is the self-talk technique, which is an individual's ability to give instructions or suggestions to themselves. This study aims to examine the effect of applying the self-talk technique in increasing the self-confidence of football athletes. An experimental method with a pretest-posttest design was used in this study involving 25 football athletes from the Indonesia University of Education. The instrument used was a self-confidence questionnaire administered before and after the self-talk treatment over one week. Data analysis was conducted using statistical tests with the help of SPSS. The study results showed an increase in the athletes' self-confidence levels after being given self-talk treatment, as indicated by the difference in scores between the pretest and posttest. This study concluded that the self-talk technique has an effect on improving the self-confidence of football athletes. training can be systematically designed to foster optimal athletic mindsets.

✉ Corresponding author : Mochamad Yamin Saputra
E-mail: mochyamins@upi.edu

INTRODUCTION

Soccer is a sport that requires not only physical and technical abilities, but also the psychological readiness of athletes. In the context of competitive sports, psychological factors play an important role in supporting athletes' overall performance (Gould, 2015). One of the most important psychological aspects is self-confidence (Sin, 2017). Self-confidence is related to an individual's belief in their ability to face certain situations, including sports competitions (Rizky et al., 2021). Athletes who possess good psychological conditions tend to be more prepared to deal with competitive pressure (Mansell & Turner, 2022). Therefore, psychological aspects are an essential part of soccer athlete development (Candra et al., 2025). This is in line with the view that physical, technical, tactical, and psychological skill factors must be developed synergistically and simultaneously, because each factor complements and strengthens one another in achieving performance excellence (Komarudin et al., 2024).

Self-confidence is an important factor that influences athletes' performance in various competition situations (Purnamasari & Novian, 2021; Weinberg, R. S., & Gould, 2015). Athletes with high levels of self-confidence tend to make quick and accurate decisions on the field (Sin, 2017). On the other hand, low self-confidence can lead to doubt, anxiety, and decreased athletic performance (Rizky et al., 2021). Research shows that self-confidence has a significant relationship with sports performance, especially in competitive conditions (Simonsmeier et al., 2020). In addition, self-confidence also plays a role in helping athletes control their emotions during competition (Lochbaum et al., 2022). Thus, self-confidence is an important factor that needs to be developed in soccer.

In practice, soccer athletes often face various situations that can affect their self-confidence. Mistakes in the game, such as inaccurate passing, losing ball possession, or failing to score goals, may trigger feelings of disappointment that lead to self-doubt (Lochbaum et al., 2022). This condition can be worsened by the high pressure of competition from opponents and the surrounding environment (Hadian et al., 2024). Research indicates that low self-confidence is associated with increased competitive anxiety in athletes (Raynadi et al., 2017). Furthermore, high anxiety can negatively affect athletes' performance in decision-making on the field (Upadhyay, 2024). Therefore, self-confidence issues remain an obstacle in improving soccer athletes' performance (Akbar et al., 2023).

One psychological approach that can be used to overcome these problems is the self-talk technique (Cahyandari, 2023; Maharani et al., n.d.). Self-talk is an internal process in the form of dialogue used by individuals to direct their thoughts and behaviors toward a more positive direction (Tod et al., 2011). In the context of sports, this technique has been proven effective in improving athletes' motivation, concentration, and self-confidence (Arifah et al., 2025; Latinjak & Hatzigeorgiadis, 2022). Positive self-talk also helps athletes control their emotions and reduce negative thoughts when facing competitive pressure (Indraharsani & Budisetyani, 2018). In addition, self-talk interventions are known to improve athletes' performance in various sports. Thus, the self-talk technique is a potential strategy for increasing the self-confidence of soccer athletes.

Although many studies on the self-talk technique have been conducted, most research still focuses on improving performance in general (Hatzigeorgiadis et al., 2011). Research specifically examining the effect of self-talk on the self-confidence of university-level soccer athletes is still limited (Cahyandari, 2023). In addition, the implementation of self-talk techniques in university sports club training programs has not yet been systematically integrated (Komarudin, 2011). This indicates a clear research gap, as prior literature often overlooks how structured, short-term self-talk interventions specifically function within the unique psychological climate of university-level student-athletes, who must balance academic demands with high-stakes athletic competition. This condition indicates the need to examine the effectiveness of self-talk techniques in improving the self-confidence of soccer athletes. Therefore, this study aims to examine the effect of implementing self-talk techniques on improving the self-confidence of soccer athletes at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia. The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of athlete training programs based on psychological aspects.

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of this study are expected to contribute to the development of athlete training programs based on psychological aspects. Furthermore, this study provides valuable insights into the development of sport-psychology-based training frameworks and offers actionable, field-tested coping mechanisms for managing competitive anxiety and match-induced pressures.

METHODS

Research Design

This study uses an experimental method to determine the effect of applying self-talk techniques on improving the self-confidence of soccer athletes (Effendy & Jannah, 2019). The experimental method allows researchers to directly provide treatment to research subjects and observe subsequent psychological changes (Yurni, 2025). The research design used is a one-group pretest-posttest design, where subjects are evaluated before and after a specific intervention period (Henry Wasosa, 2025). Subject levels of self-confidence were measured via pretest, followed by a one-week self-talk treatment, and concluded with a posttest to capture changes (Alamsyah et al., 2023).

Participants and Sample

The subjects are 25 active athletes from the Football Student Activity Unit (UKM) at the Indonesia University of Education (UPI). Purposive sampling was utilized to select participants based on specific objective criteria (Suriani & Jailani, 2023). The inclusion criteria required that subjects: (1) actively participate in ongoing training, (2) are aged between 18–21 years, and (3) possess a minimum of five years of competitive football training experience. These criteria ensure that participants have a mature foundation in football to comprehend and systematically practice the intervention.

Instruments

The instrument used is an adapted self-confidence questionnaire based on the work of Nursaba et al. (2024). This Likert-scale questionnaire features targeted items evaluating multi-dimensional constructs of athlete self-confidence, including belief in personal capability, emotional control, and decision-making decisiveness. The adapted instrument demonstrated strong construct validity and high internal consistency reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient exceeding acceptable thresholds (>0.70), ensuring objective and dependable data collection. Respondents completed this questionnaire twice: at pretest before the intervention and at posttest immediately following the completion of the self-talk protocol.

Intervention Procedure

This research utilizes positive self-talk treatments to direct thoughts and optimize the psychological profiles of athletes (Fabella, 2019; Hatzigeorgiadis et al., 2011). Positive self-talk encourages constructive internal dialogue to bolster confidence and mitigate negative thoughts during active performance (Latinjak & Hatzigeorgiadis, 2022). The field protocol spans a duration of one week with a fixed frequency of three structured sessions. In each session, athletes receive conceptual guidance regarding self-talk mechanisms (Van Raalte et al., 2016). Specific verbal cues provided include operational phrases such as: “I can control the game,” “I believe in my abilities,” and “I am ready to face the pressure of the match”. Athletes were explicitly trained to implement these cues before, during, and after practice sessions. Monitoring and continuous reinforcement were conducted by researchers throughout the week to ensure strict adherence and consistent internalization.

Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were performed using SPSS software. The data analysis plan utilized the Shapiro-Wilk test to verify the assumption of normality within the datasets. Once normality was statistically established, a parametric paired-samples t-test was executed to evaluate the primary hypothesis regarding pretest-to-posttest score differentials. The criteria for statistical significance was defined at a threshold of $p < 0.05$.

Research Limitations

It is necessary to acknowledge certain limitations within this study's methodology. First, the use of a one-group pretest-posttest design without an external control group limits the ability to completely isolate external confounding variables or maturation effects. Second, the short intervention duration of one week represents an immediate assessment of positive self-talk, and long-term retention effects require further longitudinal investigation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variabel	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
<i>Pre-test</i>	25	27	33	760	30.40	1.826
<i>Post-test</i>	25	32	41	880	35.20	2.255

Based on **Table 1**, the results of the descriptive test show that the number of research subjects was 25 athletes. In the pretest results, a minimum score of 27 and a maximum of 33 were obtained, with an average (mean) score of 30.40 and a standard deviation of 1.826. After being given the self-talk technique treatment, the posttest results showed an increase in scores, with a minimum score of 32 and a maximum of 41. The average (mean) score in the posttest increased to 35.20 with a standard deviation of 2.255. In addition, the total score (sum) also increased from 760 in the pretest to 880 in the posttest. presentation also follows the existing rules. The title or name of the image is placed below the image.

The increase in the average and total scores indicates a tendency of improved self-confidence in athletes after being given the treatment. Although there is a slight increase in the standard deviation values, the data still shows a relatively homogeneous distribution. Thus, descriptively, it can be concluded that the implementation of self-talk techniques has a positive impact on improving the self-confidence of soccer athletes.

Table 2. Normality Test Results

	<i>Shapiro-Wilk</i>		
	<i>Statistic</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>Pretest</i>	.929	25	.084
<i>Posttest</i>	.923	25	.060

Based on the results of the normality test using the Shapiro-Wilk method in **Table 2**, the significance value (Sig.) for the pretest data was 0.084 and for the posttest was 0.060. Both significance values are greater than 0.05 (Sig. > 0.05), so it can be concluded that the pretest and posttest data are normally distributed. With the normality assumption fulfilled, the data analysis can be continued using parametric statistical tests, namely the paired sample t-test, to test the research hypothesis.

Table 3. Hypothesis Test Results

	Mean	t	df	Sig	Description
<i>Self-Talk</i>	-4.800	-11.877	24	<,001	Signifikan

Based on the results of hypothesis testing using the paired sample t-test in Table 3, an average difference (mean difference) of -4.800 was obtained with a calculated t-value of -11.877 and degrees of freedom (df) of 24. The significance value (Sig.) obtained was < 0.001, which means it is smaller than 0.05 (Sig. < 0.05).

The results indicate that there is a significant difference between pretest and posttest scores after the self-talk technique treatment is applied. Thus, it can be concluded that the research hypothesis is accepted, namely that there is a significant effect of implementing the self-talk technique on improving the self-confidence of football athletes

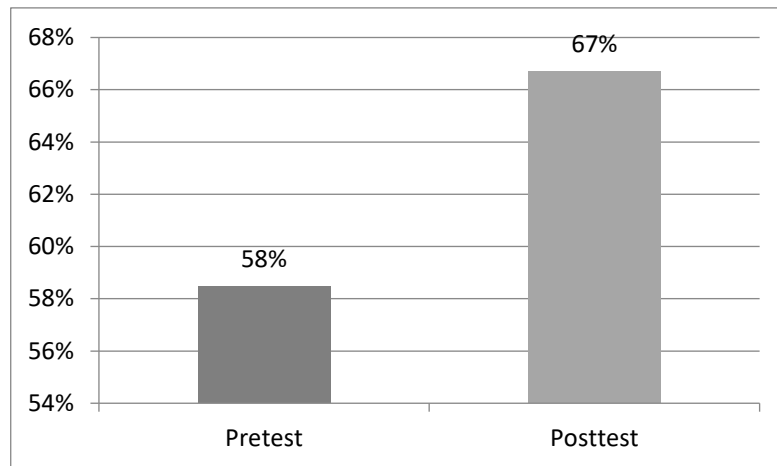


Figure 1. Percentage Results of Applying Self-Talk Techniques to Improve the Self-Confidence of Soccer Athletes at the University

The research results showing a significant influence from the application of self-talk techniques on athletes' self-confidence can be explained through the cognitive processes that occur during the treatment (Bayköse et al., 2019). Self-talk techniques provide athletes with the opportunity to change negative thought patterns into more positive ones, thereby increasing confidence in their abilities (Temel, 2025). This proves that sports activities not only affect the physical aspect but also have broad psychological benefits in building a strong mental structure (Novian et al., 2024). This process plays a role in helping athletes control emotions and reduce doubts that often arise when facing the pressures of competition, (Pineda Hernández, 2022). When negative thoughts can be well managed, athletes tend to be more able to concentrate and show higher levels of self-confidence in performing tasks on the field. Thus, the changes produced are not only temporary but also contribute to the overall improvement of athletes' psychological conditions (Latinjak & Hatzigeorgiadis, 2022).

Another factor that supports significant results in this study is the suitability of the self-talk technique with the psychological needs of soccer athletes (Boy et al., 2025). In competitive sports, athletes are often faced with situations that require quick and accurate decision-making (Ichdah et al., 2026). The self-talk technique helps athletes to remain calm and focused, thereby reducing anxiety and improving self-control. This more stable psychological condition contributes to increased confidence of athletes in playing (Rachma, 2025). Therefore, the application of the self-talk technique becomes effective because it can address psychological problems that are genuinely experienced by athletes on the field (Hamid et al., 2025). This need has become increasingly urgent considering that football players often face social pressure from fanatic crowds, which can psychologically trigger anxiety and disrupt focus during matches (Lukman et al., 2024). In such high-pressure situations, self-talk techniques act as a self-control tool that helps athletes maintain their concentration so they are not easily influenced by environmental intimidation, enabling them to continue making accurate technical decisions on the field (Saputra, 2021).

In terms of literature, this study presents a distinct new contribution to the field of student-athlete sports psychology. While existing research often addresses elite professional populations, these findings isolate how a targeted, brief positive self-talk protocol can successfully mitigate the unique psychosocial stress factors surrounding university-level athletes who balance performance demands with academic expectations.

From a practical coaching standpoint, coaches can seamlessly implement these self-talk techniques routinely by embedding verbal cue development directly into daily training components. For instance, coaches can dedicate the first 5 minutes of pre-practice briefings to aligning personal positive cues and conclude post-practice evaluations by reviewing internal dialogue quality. Ultimately, these findings serve as an empirical foundation for the future development of standardized sports psychology modules. Such modules could provide

academic institutions and sports clubs with structured, replicable psychological training regimens alongside physical programming.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of data analysis and discussion, this study concludes that the application of self-talk techniques has a significant effect on enhancing the self-confidence of soccer athletes at the Indonesia University of Education. This is statistically proven through the increase in the average self-confidence score from 30.40 during the pretest to 35.20 during the posttest, with a very strong level of significance. This increase occurs because the cognitive process in self-talk allows athletes to replace negative internal dialogue with positive instructions, enabling them to better control emotions, reduce doubts, and maintain concentration under pressure. The success of this intervention also shows that self-confidence is not merely a static mental condition, but a skill that can be improved through active involvement and consistent internalization of positive suggestions by athletes during training and matches.

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