

Self-Talk Under Perceived Pressure Situations in High School Athletics



Kylie McEnroe

Critical Terms

Self-Talk:

- What one tells him/herself in action of sport
- Most commonly internal
- Can be external

Pressure:

- Constraint set by one's own ideology
- Assumption of judgement
 - Often created by player based on parental or coach notions

What Causes Pressure to be Perceived in Sports?

Perceived- to become internally conscious or aware of:

- Intense situations
- Unrealistic expectations ¹
- Inability to handle crisis moments ¹
- Degrading atmosphere ¹

Why is this an Issue?

- Negative factors overstimulate an athlete's brain
 - Anxiety
 - Decreased capability of favorable outcome²

What can be Done?

- Make athletes aware of personal self-talk usage (survey)
- Implement positive self-talk strategies
- Reveal to outside influence the effects of their actions

Prior Research

- Only study collegiate and professional levels in US
- Only individually study self-talk *or* pressure; have not been correlated before
- Found relevance of self-talk but have not compared among ages
 - This age group is the future of athletics and needs consideration at this point in time

Purpose of Research

- Improve mental dexterity of athletes
- Call awareness to self-talk usage so it may be best utilized, especially in pressure situations
- Make coaches & parents aware of their impact on young athletes

Purpose of Research

- Mature performance
- Strengthen task-oriented focus
- Benefit school and individuals
 - Improve studies and test score

Question

How does self-talk correlate with pressure in performance situations within high-school athletics?

- How does self-talk usage vary among different competition levels?

Hypothesis

The use of positive self-talk in athletics is a beneficial coping mechanism that can positively affect performance situations.

- The older the athlete and higher the competition level, the more one relies on self-talk to perform

Methods

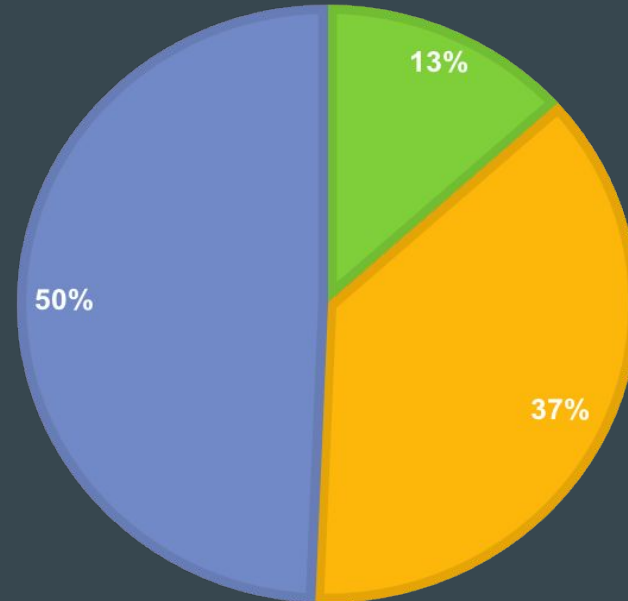
- Individual sports tested:
 - Swim
 - Softball
 - Baseball
- Team sports tested:
 - Basketball
 - Soccer
- Dynamic:
 - Football

Methods

- Studied 150 athletes
 - 58.7 % Female
 - 41.4% Male

PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS

■ Freshmen/Frosh Soph ■ Junior Varsity ■ Varsity



Methods

- Anonymous online survey
- 16 questions
 - Four open-ended responses
 - 12 Likert scale questions

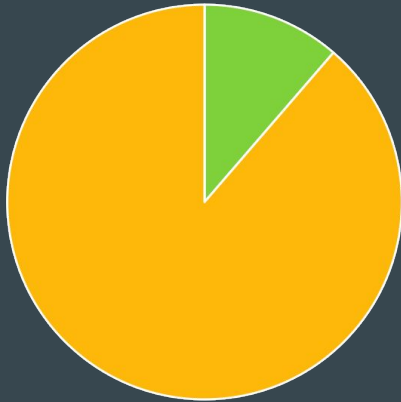
Survey

- Scale:
 - 1=almost never, 2=sometimes, 3=often, and 4=almost always

- Self-Talk and Pressure each measured by:
 - 2 Positive Likert
 - 1 positive open-ended
 - 2 Negative Likert
 - 1 negative open-ended

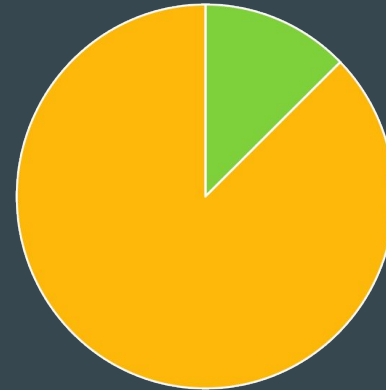
Data Analysis

I feel nervous and anxious in pressure situations



■ Almost Never, 11.3% ■ Sometimes, Often, Almost Always, 88.7%

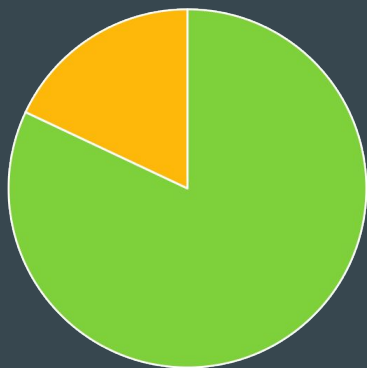
When in a pressure situation, I am able to concentrate better and make fewer mistakes



■ Almost Never, 12.7% ■ Often, Sometimes, Almost Always, 87.3%

Data Analysis

I worry about what others (coach, parents, teammates, etc.) are thinking of me while playing and this affects my play



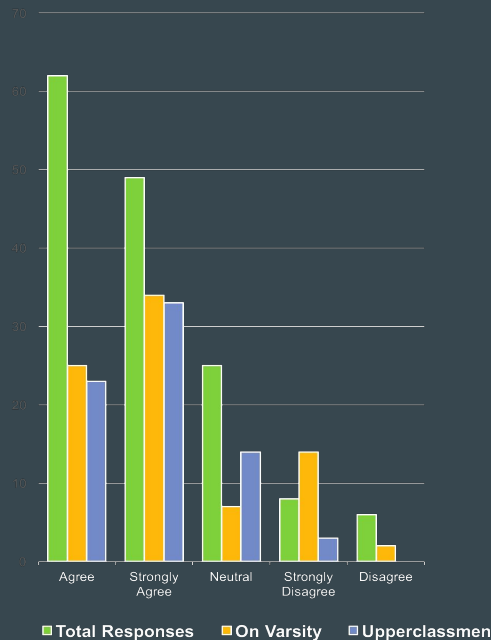
■ Sometimes, Often, Almost Always, 82% ■ Almost Never, 18%

- Outside influences often create negative self-talk and unneeded pressure that degrade performance more so than accelerating

Data Analysis

10 out of the 14 athletes who disagreed to I believe that what I tell myself during competition impacts how I play still claim to use self-talk; a majority of which is positive/reinforcing (56%) as opposed to negative or harsh fashions (44%)

Responses to “I believe that what I tell myself during competition impacts how I play”



Data Analysis

- 71.3% support and encourage themselves while performing with high frequency
- 30.7% who often or almost always speak to themselves with means of negative motivation (ex: I can't miss this, I have to catch this pass, etc.) report that this hurt performance

Limitations

- Multisport athletes-influenced answers from knowledge gained in other sports
- Honesty /validity of survey responses
 - If observed, study would not be anonymous
 - Lack of time
- Lack of responses from football
 - Not enough data from this population to fairly summarize their responses

Future Research Considerations

- Study other sports not included here
- Further observe athletes with series of surveys to record development over time
- Focus on other affecting factors
 - Worry
 - Effect of injury
- Observe athletes before the high school levels; club teams
- Account for parent and coach insight

Conclusion

- The higher the competition level, the more one relies on self-talk under pressure moments
 - Older athletes especially utilize it more so than younger
- Considering outside influences increases negative pressure
 - Diminishes likelihood of success
- Self-generated pressure allows for better concentration and less mistakes during play

References

- ¹ Krane, V., & Williams, J. M. (2010). Psychological Characteristics of Peak Performance. In J. Williams (Ed.), *Applied Sports Psychology, Personal Growth to Peak Performance* (Vol. 6) (pp 169-188) New York, NY: McGraw Hill
- ² Schwebel, F. J., Smith, R. E., & Smoll, F. L. (2016). Measurement of Perceived Parental Success Standards in Sport and Relations with Athletes' Self-Esteem, Performance Anxiety, and Achievement Goal Orientation: Comparing Parental and Coach Influences. *Child Development Research*, 1-13. doi:10.1155/2016/7056075

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