Abstract: Self-talk is the process by which an individual may guide him/herself to accomplish a goal. Positive self-talk relates to the ability to overcome negative thinking. Those who practice positive self-talk are more likely not to suffer from negative thoughts. The present study aimed to examine the effect of self-talk on intervarsity male volleyball players’ performance. For this purpose, we selected n=84 players with an age range between 18-25 [mean age =23.7±2.05] from all Pakistan Volleyball intervarsity competitions 2019-2020. The study of results convinced that the majority of athletes strongly agreed that positive self-talk had a significant optimistic effect on their performances and reduced negative feelings and emotions before and during competition. It has been exhibited that self-talk increments in recurrence as the event progresses to be more challenging or competitive.

Key Words: Self-talk, Volleyball, Players, Performance

Introduction

Volleyball is a group activity where two teams of six players are parted by a net. Each group attempts to score focuses by establishing a ball in the other group’s court under coordinated guidelines. It has been a piece of the authority program of the Summer Olympic Games since Tokyo 1964. In sport psychology, research support the utilization of mental skill training for improving game execution, counting for upgrades in focus, imagery, positive reasoning and self-talk.

Self-talk is whatever a person thinks and communicates with himself. Self-talk is characterized by the process of reinforcement and giving instructions to oneself through internal dialogue by interpreting one’s perception and feelings about current circumstances [Geurts, B. (2018)]. Self-talking comprises of athletes completely focusing on their activities either by shouting out loud or internally making statements referring to themselves either during, before, or after the execution of an activity, either in a competition or in practice [Abdoli et al., 2017].

The thinking process is usually unconscious which affects the feelings, emotions, hormonal regulation and in response to this, the athlete gets affected. Reardon [1993] stated that self-talk is the sort of mental activity which is comprised of conscious thinking and then expressing it in words to make oneself understand [Adjepong 2017]. Hardy [2006] defines self-talk as the process of expression of thoughts to ourselves in the form of statements, as it is a multidimensional explanatory process that not only guides but motivates as well, in short, it is dynamic. According to Ellis’s mental canon [1994], is the stage of pressing stations when crucial and efficient decisions are made, such as decision making in sports, can lead to illogical thinking pattern in players.

Players getting distracted from their goals or making similar mistakes repeatedly may be driven by some emotional conflicts or personal insecurities that eventually is hampering performance or causing defocus. Zinsser, Bunker and Williams [2001] understood and shared the idea of self-talking as being a key to cognitive control of an athlete relying on positive statements and controlling aggressive acts and behaviors. Also, impeding the negative behavior or the illogical thoughts by disapproving them or giving rise to the positive thoughts [Zetou et al., 2014]. Not only in competitions but even during practice, this strategy can be applied due to the continuity of the process. Developing a players’ self, organizing their thoughts and controlling his actions or behaviors plus the inclusion of the forcefulness and the aggressiveness in the right direction consequently leading to the right decision-making
techniques can be taught by using appropriate keywords. Self-talking motivated athletes and are encouraged to focus on points of the skill for a greater amount of work done during practice (Slimani et al., 2017). Self-talk is an integral part of the psychological programs of many coaches as the research concludes it to be an indispensable part (Gill et al., 2017). Most of the spots coaches, in their programs, utilize self-talk. According to sports psychology, this mental practice along with experience makes the performance better by raising the confidence level of athletes and eliminating the fear of failure (Zetou et al., 2014). According to Lepadatu (2012), as an effective tool, self-talk is part of the learning process (Robbins and Madrigal, 2016).

Various studies divide self-talk into two categories which are negative and positive. For improvement in the level of self-evaluation and confidence of athlete, self-talk is helpful and putting maximum effort leads to improved performance (Gamble and Gamble, 2017). Along with it, positive self-talk results in their improved level of concentration of athletes towards the central goal and reduces the distraction and thoughts of failures in past matches. Negative self-talk is characterized by timidity, self-blame and unhealthy criticism in mind about oneself. It results in poor performance due to negative distracting thoughts and low confidence (Busch and Watson, 2017).

Literature Review

In day-to-day activities, self-talk is part of people’s lives. Whatever players inform themselves has concerning which effects on settings along with nerve-racking things (Dickson et al., 2017). During competition and performance in an observable way, this comes to life (Gill et al., 2017). By reducing anxiety and developing skills, performance enhancement occurs through self-talk (Theodorakis et al., 2000).

Professional athletes who are aware of the usefulness of self-talk track its progress in their psychological training (Gammage et al., 2001). During the process of performance, a mental status when a person becomes immersed in the condition of keen focus, enjoying and involving oneself for the best performance of activity as stated in positive psychology which is also called a zone. During a flow state, the player performs better than the performance in the absence of flow experience. Several types of research have been made in the pursuit of self-talk and flow but the relationship among these two constructs is yet to be supported by further evidence. Recent studies, however, suggest achieving flow during a competition is directly proportional to the use of certain types of self-talks (Richard et al., 2017).

In a practice setting the role of flow state and self-talk, their relationship with each other and during competitive state has been attempted to study in this research. A great amount of research has been put into sports psychology over the years to define self-talk (Gill et al., 2017). Consequently, researchers have presented various definitions for it. People proposed definitions as they perceived in their minds (Moran, 2017).

Another definition proposed by Hackfort and Schwenkmegger (1993) defines self-talk as the process of reinforcing and instructing through positive feelings and thoughts during a conversation with oneself. A changed understanding of the situation by Theodorakis et al. (2000) self-talk may be an overt or covert conversation with oneself before, during, or after the practice or competition. The statements only made internally to oneself were referred to as covert self-talk (Millman 2017). The verbalizations that are made out loud during or before competitions can be referred to as overt self-talks. As the child grows, the self-talk also transitions from overt to being covert due to social awareness.

Cognitive and behavioral theories in psychology, make up the roots of self-talk theories (Stephens, 2017). Verbal persuasion is the component of the self-efficacy theory of Bandura (1997), where self-talk is the basic element (Villani et al., 2017). Self-talk is of significant importance for self-regulation. Vygotsky (1986) through the self-regulatory process the positive thoughts influence cognition. (Hadidi, 2017). In qualitative research, Hardy (2006) found that self-talk influences the players in two ways which are motivational and instructional.

Many studies divided self-talk into neutral, negative and positive self-talk. According to the findings of researchers, there is no certain conclusion whether the negative or positive self-talk is more beneficial or positive self-talk (Bakker 2017). For instance, a study was conducted among three groups of dart-throwing participants: no specific instructions were given to the control group regarding self-talk, a 2nd group instructed to say, “I can do it” (positive) and a 3rd group instructed to say, “I cannot do it” (negative). It was concluded that the performance of those players who utilized the positive self-talk achieved more benefit as compared to those athletes who utilized the negative self-talk (Woodman, 2015). Although, there was not a significant difference between the negative self-talk and control groups (Abdoli et al., 2017).
Another such study by Dargou et al. (1992) had similar results. Observing tennis players under the same conditions resulting in no improvement in performance through positive self-talk; however, a great quantity of losing and demotivating performances were observed within the negative self-talk group (Van et al., 1994). These cases can be related to the findings by Hatzigeorgiadis and Biddle (2008) that negative self-talk can be generated because of the high level of difference between actual performance and goal performance. Highlen and Bennett (1983) found through research that divers who used the strategy of positive and negative self-talk performed better during competition than those who didn’t use this strategy; these findings prove and complicate that there is a positive effect of both kind of self-talk when used with proper protocols. Mainly, it’s the player that determines the effect of self-talk upon his performance by responding either positively or negatively. Many relevant types of research have suggested that the most prevalent is neutral self-talk.

Cognitive self-talk, also known as instructional self-talk, aids in skill learning and giving concentration for performing better. Developing self-statements which includes instruction a set of skills or the task at hand is a practice of cognitive self-talk. An example includes an intervention study for sprinters using cognitive self-talk by using the phrases for example heel, push and claw relative to the racing strategies (Mallet and Hanrahan, 1997). Along with sprinting, instructional self-talk has shown benefits with regards to performance in other athletic disciplines including golf, tennis (Landin and Hebert, 1999), basketball (Perkos et al., 2002), and water polo (Hatzigeorgiadis et al., 2004) were also beneficial of instructional self-talk and showed enhanced performances.

Motivational self-talk, on the other hand, provides the athletic performer with concentration, exhilaration, self-efficacy and confidence either he is ramping up or is relaxed. For novices or general exercisers, motivational self-talk may help get them out of bed and do some workouts. While, for professional athletes, it is used during training, before the competition and during the competition. It was stated earlier that motivational self-talk might use appropriate keywords or statements such as “you can do it” or “Buck up” or “you got it”. Its effectiveness can be used in a variety of sports including distance running, basketball (Hatzigeorgiadis et al., 2004) and water polo (Perkos et al., 2002).

Objectives of the Study

The aim of the present study was to check the effect of self-talk on male intervarsity volleyball players’ performance through paper-pencil survey method.

Material and Method

The research study was quantitative. Through a convenient sampling technique, eighty-four (84) male inter-university volleyball players of age between 18 to 24 years from seven (7) public and private universities situated in Lahore city were selected for this study. All these players had participated in Higher Education Commission (HEC) intervarsity sports competition 2019-2020 representing their universities. Consent was taken from the players as well as their coaches and team management before getting the response of players on self-talk through the survey method.

The sample population completed the Self-Talk Use Questionnaire (STUQ), which was developed specifically for the study. The design of questionnaires included statements 5-Likert scales ranging from 1 to 5, 1 being strongly disagreed, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4= agree and 5 strongly agree. Data was collected from the sample population through the Self-Talk Use Questionnaire (STUQ) which was consisted of 20 items. SPSS version 16 (statistical package for social sciences) was used for the analysis of the collected data. In which frequency test was used to generate possible results.

Results

| Results Summary | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-----------------|------------------|---------|---------|-------|---------------|
| Frequency       | 13               | 10      | 21      | 43    | 13            |
Major Findings

The present study was conducted on intervarsity male volleyball players of different public and private universities of Lahore. According to the results of existing study majority of players were agreed that positive self-talk keep them motivated, positive,
players speak louder to release their aggression, keep them relax, increase their performance, senior players use more this technique rather than junior players, increase their self-confidence, due to self-talk level of empathy among teammates about game strategies are increased, control their negative emotions and aggression, help to keep focus on opponents’ game strategies during game, self-talk also improve their mental level and remove their fear also.

Discussion

Self-talk is a valuable tool for athletes both as an instructional tool and as a motivational tool. As being motivational and instructional tool athletes’ use self-talk. When learning a skill or acquiring a specific technique or precision; instructional self-talk is applicable. Motivational self-talk, however, is more frequently used to focus on specific points or coinciding the points of skill with the contents of endurance or strength training, motivational boosts and arousal control. A thrilling game such as Volleyball is based on sets of best of three and best of five. While performing a serve, smash, or other skills, self-talk looks to be more appealing towards the players. When managing pressure situations or compelling yourself for a continuous strenuous performance or maximizing your motivational level; self-talk is readily used by the players. It does in any case, rely upon the competitor to decide the positive or negative impact of Self-talk by reacting to it. Interests of mentors and other people who are concerned within the sports coaching procedure is to enhance the instructing strategies and therefore the content of coaching by including a self-talk training method beneath the psychological method, to deliver master competitors for the game.

Conclusion

This study provides the perception of intervarsity volleyball players on self-talk and its effect on their performance, their logical understanding of the whole phenomenon to make them realize the importance of the overall concept and to properly train for it and imply it for the best possible outcomes. After careful analysis of the data, it was concluded that the majority of the players claim that they help each other on the task. Results showing the majority of male and female players have accepted that the phenomenon was very appealing to them and now they got to a full understanding of it through doing their part in the study. Self-talk keeps them motivated, positive, feel relaxed, speaking louder during the games, helping to gain confidence and self-talk control their emotions. When applied in a proper training program under the sport psychology part, coaches encourage them to do self-talk, their self-talk helps when they are near to finish the game.

Future Recommendations

- Good and positive Self-talk has a significant effect on volleyball players.
- Self-talk leads to optical performance in players.
- Psychological factors on players direct to different body reactions.
- More psychological factors apply to players for checking the level of mental performance.
- Self-talk should also be applied to all professional and novice players.
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