

Select Psalms and Proverbs as Self-Talk and Students' Self-Worth

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Abstract

This study determined the impact of self-talk on the students' self-worth. One hundred eighty-one (181) purposively chosen participants engaged in self-talk activity using select Psalms for three months. The study utilized the validated researcher-made questionnaire on self-worth to gather data. The descriptive statistics and t-test for the dependent sample obtained the quantitative results. Findings revealed an improved self-worth level among the participants. With frequent exposure to positive self-talk using the Psalms and Proverbs, the participants maintained their stable or very high-level self-worth. The study concluded that Psalms and Proverbs as self-talk is an effective and powerful technique in modifying a person's negative emotions, thoughts, and actions towards a stable and positive outlook about themselves. The study suggests that self-talk, especially Psalms and Proverbs, edifies and builds up high-level self-worth.

Keywords: Psalms, Proverbs, self-talk, self-worth, students

Introduction

Life is God's precious gift for every human to value. But, just as one song goes, "Only one life so soon it will pass." Man is like a breath whose days are compared to a passing shadow (Psalm 144:4), making life just short-lived. Since life is a valuable present, each person is responsible for building up his sense of self-worth.

Internal and external factors or circumstances affect a person's self-worth in life. For instance, during the outbreak of the life-threatening COVID-19 pandemic, people's sense of worth seems shaken, bringing accidental changes in their lifestyle, attitudes, and

perceptions of life itself. Moreover, amid the pandemic, varied mental health issues arise, leading to suicide cases of some depressed people.

In this sense, developing a positive and empowering attitude toward oneself is needed to build a real sense of self-worth. According to Harter (1990), this valuing process leads to feelings of self-respect, confidence, and a positive self-image. Moreover, it frequently reminds oneself of these positive thought patterns by telling oneself some constructive phrases to boost self-worth.

In modifying the person's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, studies reveal the crucial contributions of "self-talk"

as a Cognitive Behavior Modification technique (Meichenbaum, 1977). What people tell themselves affects the way they behave. One of these is the spoken words that may have the power to make things happen, just like in the passage "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits" (*Proverbs* 18:21).

Strategies like self-talk involving mental processes regulate cognitions and develop or change existing thought patterns (Ellis, 1976). Self-talk is a subset of thinking, a conversation with one's self. It makes up a person according to how he guards himself for his benefit. Self-talk focused on positive leads to positive feelings and more confidence (Wilson, 2009).

The way the person talks to himself means him "loving himself," which also shapes his identity. The quality of the inner speech - positive words - produces positive advantages. Self-talk stimulates self-reflection, increases motivation, and connects with human emotions. Self-talk enhances confidence to overcome complex challenges (Hatzigeorgiadis, Zourbanos, Mpoupaki, & Theodorakis, 2009). Talking to oneself more frequently means having a higher self-awareness and self-evaluation. When people build positive self-talk, self-worth becomes stable (Bénabou & Tirole, 2002, in Chopra, 2012).

This study determined the effects of self-talk using biblical verses on the participants' self-worth with the above concept. Most self-talk conversations are in the form of positive statements towards self, depending on the emotions that prevail on the individual.

Nonetheless, the use of biblical verses as self-talk has not been investigated. Specifically, the study's concern is to examine the efficacy of verses taken from *Psalms and Proverbs* on the participants' self-worth levels.

Self-talk

Even in a stressful situation, talking to oneself is a human phenomenon that regulates or influences behavior when done from time to time (Kross *et al.*, 2014). This internal dialogue or monologue, which psychologists call "self-talk," is a person's inner or private speech (Brinthaupt, Hein, & Kramer, 2009; Rongione, 2014).

'Self-talk' means verbalizing the words aloud (overt) or expressing them silently in mind (covert). As a cognitive-behavioral modification technique, self-talk lessens anxiety and improves self-confidence and self-optimization (Georgakaki & Karakasidou, 2017; Walter, Nikoleizig, & Alfermann, 2019). The words the person thinks or says can create either negative emotions (anger, frustration) or positive emotions (joy, peace, love) that affect the way he interprets situations (Chopra, 2012). Therefore, the person needs to engage in self-talk to change his cognitions and behaviors (Theodorakis, Weinberg, Natsis, Douma & Kazakas, 2000, in Sarig, 2017). With self-talk, he can have a relaxed mind (Daftari, Sofian, Sadeghi, & Akbari, 2011).

For effective self-talk, the person needs to observe linguistic shifting from the pronoun "I" to stating his name and using one's name or the word "you" as

self-talk is less humiliating than using "I," making the person more confident, less nervous, and more persuasive. In addition, when people consider themselves as another person, it makes or allows them to give themselves impartial, valuable feedback.

In the academic aspect, Muchin (2015) revealed that self-talk promotes students' more profound engagement with educational material and increases cognitive advancements. With self-talk, students can ponder on a complex matter; their understanding of a novel concept increases self-talk, redirects or restructures thought processes, and engages in a task. With higher self-talk usage, students showed less stress during exams (Rongione, 2014).

In a sports setting, self-talk enhances motor tasks and sports performance. Daftari *et al.* (2011) stressed that self-talk is advantageous as mental training in an athletic life. Inner conversations have a powerful impact on emotional well-being and motivation, energy management, attention, stress management, self-confidence, and goal setting (Boroujeni, & Ghaheri, 2011); Hatzigeorgiadis, 2011; Blanchfield *et al.*, 2014).

Hidayat and Budiman (2014) found that self-talk shows a significantly better improvement and manifested self-confidence for novice badminton athletes. Specifically, in quiet eye training, instructional self-talk is a potential tool. Using instructional verbal cues increases the quiet eye period's duration, which improves the athletes' performance (Sarig, 2017). Self-talk builds the athletes' confidence to

execute skills and maintain focus. Self-talk makes them relax and calm down for mental preparation. It helps control anxiety to feel motivated to perform well (Spak, 2014).

Furthermore, Hatzigeorgiadis *et al.* (2009) reported that motivational self-talk reduced cognitive anxiety and increased self-confidence, positively affecting students' task performance. There were increased self-efficacy and performance among tennis players as the facilitating effects of motivational self-talk. According to Blanchfield, Hardy, De Morree, Staiano, and Marcora (2014), motivational self-talk is a powerful technique to endure or reduce the effort to enhance sports performance.

Teaster III (2004) suggested using positive self-talk statements to build self-esteem, a sense of competency, and self-worth for the abused. They can develop cognitive restructuring through self-talk, which helps them overcome abusive feelings. Self-talk can alter the person's perceptions, attitudes, reactions, and responses with themselves or the circumstances by rethinking negative statements to Chopra's positive statements (2012). Self-talking needs to be goal-directed to create activated states, regulate behavior, and focus on the positive. For a person in an anger-elicited state, spontaneous self-talk is negative (Latinjak, 2017).

High self-worth is a positive self-talk product (Brinthaupt & Dove, 2012; Ford, 2015). Exposure to adults' and peers' positive statements as self-talk results in higher-level self-worth;

in contrast, negative self-talk plays a role in maintaining anxiety (Yaratan & Tocesoylu, 2010) and depression (Ford, 2015).

Self-worth

Self-worth concerns the person's effects, emotions, or feelings about himself. It means taking pride in oneself and his behavior, feeling good about himself and his accomplishments and having a generally positive image (Harter, 1990), an evaluative aspect of his self-concept (Bee & Boyd, 2007), and a function of how he values himself.

Some people derive their sense of self-worth from different domains, which Crocker and colleagues (2016) have identified as academics, appearance, approval from others, competition, family support, God's love, and virtue. Park, Krocke, and Mickelson (2012) found that attachment security supports a person's self-worth. Conversely, dismissing attachment style affects the person's self-worth where he values fewer others' approval, family support, and even God's love.

For students, the more they attribute their self-worth to academic success, the more they experience low self-esteem, receiving lower marks than they did not expect. On the other hand, Ståhlberg *et al.* (2019) stressed that academic self-worth contingency highly contributed to the students' achievement and performance and related achievement goals.

On the other hand, Vonk *et al.* (2017) revealed that a person manifests increased self-esteem if their very

source is regarded less like social approval. Among some adolescents, the interaction between being liked and valued and being disliked by peers decreased their self-worth.

To build a sense of self-worth, a person should focus more on his strength and engage in enjoyable learning skills (O'Shea, 2013). In addition, he can strengthen his self-compassion by developing his awareness and fostering an emotionally supportive environment that provides kindness and mindfulness (Matsuguma, 2013).

The Framework of the Study

This quasi-experimental study determined the impact of self-talk using select *Psalms and Proverbs* on the participants' self-worth. Self-talk is a Cognitive Behavior Modification technique by Meichenbaum (1977, in Sarig, 2017) that can change the participants' cognitions and behaviors.

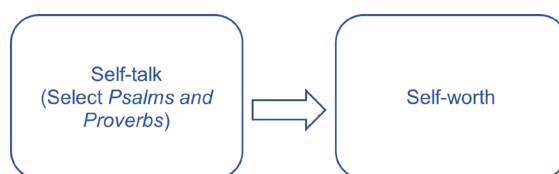


Figure 1. The Flow of the Study

Figure 1 shows the flow of the study. Self-talk using Biblical verses, specifically *Psalms and Proverbs*, may significantly affect the participants' self-worth level or positive self-image.

Purpose of the Research

This study determined the impact

of select *Psalms and Proverbs* as self-talk to build up the participants' sense of self-worth. The findings derived from the study may contribute to the body of knowledge where Biblical verses like *Psalms and Proverbs* as self-talk activity may be an effective technique in lifting the person's diminishing sense of self-worth, especially in challenging times like the COVID-19 pandemic. Engaging in repetitive self-talk using Biblical verses from *Psalms and Proverbs* may boost self-confidence and promote positive thoughts during down moments.

Specifically, the study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are the participants' levels of self-worth before and after self-talk using select *Psalms and Proverbs* as an intervention?
2. Is there a significant difference in the participants' self-worth level before and after self-talk using select *Psalms and Proverbs* as an intervention?

Methodology

This study determined the impact of using *Psalms and Proverbs* as self-talk on the participants' sense of self-worth. The study utilized a quasi-experimental design similar to randomized experimental designs but differed in participants not randomly assigned to treatment groups. Quasi-experimental design permits the researcher to arrive at reasonable conclusions even though complete control is impossible (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorencen, 2014). In this study, the participants do not have the

same chance of being in the control or experimental groups and either receiving or not receiving the self-talk of *Psalms and Proverbs* as treatment. The technique was used to gather the participants' self-talk level with verses taken from *Psalms and Proverbs*.

The participants of the study were 181 Education students identified using purposive sampling. This sampling technique was appropriate considering the participants' specific characteristics: they were all pre-service teachers under the secondary education curriculum. The majority of the participants were female whose ages ranged from 18-20 and with low to average income. Most of them graduated from public schools and primarily resided in rural areas. The sampling technique was also advantageous with the researcher supervising and controlling the four homogenous groups, being under her classes during the experiment. The purpose of the design was to allow the researcher to observe and gain insights into the participants' actual behavior as manifestations of their self-worth and their reactions to self-talk activity using biblical verses. The participants answered the pre-and-post-test on self-worth, with the researcher administering the questionnaire.

The study used a validated researcher-made instrument composed of 15 items in obtaining the participants' pretest and posttest intervention self-worth levels. Some items were adapted from the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale and were modified to include different domains such as academics as the basis of the participants' self-worth

contingencies. The items were content-validated by five English and five Social Sciences professors to achieve the statements' appropriateness and exactness. The participants would respond to the statements based on how much they agree on the given choices: SD = *Strongly Disagree*; D = *Disagree*; N = *Neutral*; A = *Agree*, and SA = *Strongly Agree*.

Before the self-talk intervention, the researcher briefed the participants, composed of four classes, on the self-talk activity. Then, the researcher let the participants sign an informed consent signifying their willingness to be part of the experiment for three months. After that, they could decide whether they participate in research voluntarily, despite the research undertaking's possible benefits or risks. The researcher informed them of their privacy and confidentiality rights and assured them of their protection from exploiting their vulnerability, disrespecting their faith or belief. After the ethical consideration, the researcher verbally explained the activity's details as an orientation before the intervention. The participants took the pretest to establish their level of self-worth.

The intervention on self-talk followed a week after the conduct of the pretest among the participants. They meditated on the select *Psalms and Proverbs* provided by the researcher. The researcher discussed three Bible verses for ten minutes at each meeting before the class started. After the discussion and self-talking of all the verses, the students orally recited the verses. They had sessions for silent meditation of

the verses at each class meeting. The participants shared verses with their peers in the class. The researcher encouraged memorization of the verses as part of the self-talk activity. They also did the self-talk activity of the verses at home. They searched for more *Psalms and Proverbs*, which they find helpful or applicable to the situation they have encountered. As an assignment, they submitted a journal where they wrote their experiences using biblical self-talk and its impact on their sense of self-worth. After the twelfth-week intervention, the participants were given the posttest to determine their level of self-worth using the same instrument. Their responses were tallied and subjected to appropriate statistical analysis and interpretation.

After the twelve-week intervention using the same instrument, the participants took the posttest to determine their self-worth level. The researcher herself administered the posttest on self-worth with items already jumbled to achieve the results' reliability or consistency. Their responses were tallied and subjected to appropriate statistical analysis and interpretation.

The data gathered for this study underwent appropriate computer-processed statistics: The obtained mean scores described the participants' pretest and posttest intervention self-worth level categorized as very high, high, low, or very low. In addition, the study utilized the t-test for dependent samples set at .05 alpha level. Finally, to determine the significance of the difference between the participants' pretest and posttest intervention self-

Table 1. *Participants' Self-Worth Level Before and After Self-talk Intervention Using Psalms and Proverbs as an entire group and classified into Low Self-Worth (LSW), High Self-Worth (HSW), and Very High Self-Worth (VHSW) groups*

	n=181	M	Description
Entire Group			
Pre-intervention		3.63	High
Post-intervention		4.20	Very high
LSW (n=22)			
Pre-intervention		2.89	Low
Post-intervention		3.91	High
HSW (n=152)			
Pre-intervention		3.56	High
Post-intervention		4.19	Very High
VHSW (n=7)			
Pre-intervention		4.33	Very High
Post-intervention		4.40	Very High

worth level, the researcher analyzed the participants' written journals on their experiences on the self-talk of biblical verses as reactions to their circumstances.

Results

This section presents the findings on the use of self-talk as an intervention to the participants' self-worth. The tables included in this section show the descriptive data analysis and interpretation of results on the participants' pre-and post-intervention self-worth levels.

Table 1 shows that at the start of the experiment, the participants manifested varied self-worth levels, from low to very high. Majority of the participants (f=152, 84%) had a high self-worth level (M=3.56), few (f=7, 3.8%) with very high self-worth, (M=3.56), and

a number (f=22, 12%) had the low self-worth level (M=2.89). It is common for people to have different levels of self-worth in different situations of life. At times, the person's valuing of himself varies, especially when he experienced heightened trials and unfavorable circumstances. His sense of self-worth may lower, and some negative thoughts overpower his senses.

The table further reveals that the participants manifested an improved self-worth level after engaging in self-talk using *Psalms and Proverbs*. After the self-talk intervention, the entire group (f=181) developed a very high self-worth level (M=4.20). Those with low self-worth (LSW) composed of twenty-two (22) participants (M=2.89) showed self-worth improvement (M= 3.91). From high self-worth (HSW) of one hundred fifty-two (152) participants (M= 3.56) became very high (M= 4.19),

Table 2. *Chi-square test results for the participants' pre-and post-intervention self-worth level as an entire group and classified into Low Self-Worth (LSW), High Self-Worth (HSW), and Very High Self-Worth (VHSW) groups*

Self-Worth Level	Mean	t-value	*p-value
Entire Group			
Pretest	3.63	-15.66	.001*
Posttest	4.20		
LSW			
Pretest	2.89	7.991	.018*
Posttest	3.91		
HSW			
Pretest	3.56	10.971	.004*
Posttest	4.19		
VHSW			
Pretest	4.33	7.82	.005*
Posttest	4.40		

*p-value < .05 = significant

and seven (7) participants maintained the very high self-worth (VHSW), before and after the intervention (M=4.33) and (M=4.40), respectively.

Differences on the Participants’ Pretest and Posttest Self-Worth Level

Table 2 reveals that significant differences exist between the pretest and post-test -intervention self-worth level among the participants as an entire group, (p=.001 <.05), and among the three groups: LSW (p=.018 < .05), HSW (p=.004 < .05), and VHSW (p=.005

< .05). The result means that self-talk intervention using Psalms and Proverbs is an effective technique in improving self-worth.

Significant findings mean the effectiveness of an intervention like the use of self-talk on the participants' self-worth. Certain domains may reveal the factors that help build up one's self-valuing process. However, the self-talk technique's frequency with the right choice of the encouraging verses may contribute more to the mediation activity.

Discussion

The pre-service teachers' participants showed varied self-worth levels, from low to very high. However, most of the participants possessed higher self-worth than those with low self-worth. Self-worth concerns the person's emotions or feelings about himself; it is his public image (Harter, 1990).

How a person esteems himself depends on some factors or domains where they derive their sense of self-worth. Crocker and colleagues (2016) have identified some domains where people value themselves: academics, appearance, and approval from others, competition, family support, God's love, and virtue.

For the pre-service teachers, academics, appearance, approval from others, competition may be their contingent self-worth. How the participants esteem themselves affects how they treat themselves or talk to themselves since self-talk is associated with self-worth.

Breithaupt and Dove (2012, in Ford, 2015) stressed that high self-worth is a product of positive self-talk, and negative words uttered to self play a role in the maintenance of anxiety (Yaratan & Tocesoylu, 2010) and depression (Ford, 2015).

Georgakaki and Karakasidou (2017) emphasized that self-talk increases self-compassion and reduces competitive anxiety levels. Self-talk can alter the person's perceptions, attitudes, reactions, and responses or the circumstances by rethinking negative

statements to positive statements (Chopra, 2012). Self-talking needs to be goal-directed to create activated states, regulate behavior, and focus on the positive. For a person in an anger-elicited state, spontaneous self-talk is negative (Latinjak, 2017).

The participants manifested an improved level of self-worth after they engaged in self-talk. A person's low self-worth level increases and stable self-worth is maintained when exposed to cognitive behavior techniques like self-talk, especially using verses from *Psalms and Proverbs*.

Harter (1990) stated that the person's self-worth is higher because he takes pride in himself and his behavior; he feels good about himself and his accomplishments. He has a generally positive image of himself. This self-worth can be enhanced or maintained when he engages more in biblical self-talk. This perspective aligns with low-level self-worth. Self-talk can alter people's perceptions, attitudes, reactions, and responses with themselves or circumstances by rethinking negative statements to positive statements (Chopra, 2012).

Psalms and Proverbs, which are biblical verses, provide encouraging and inspirational thoughts to increase confidence and develop self-compassion. Self-talk has been proven effective in various fields, as revealed by research findings. In any desperate or depressing circumstance, this is especially applicable and effective. Self-talk is a type of cognitive-behavioral modification technique. The things people say to themselves affect their

behavior. As a human phenomenon, it is common for a person to have an internal monologue from time to time which regulates or influences their behavior even in stressful situations (Kross *et al.*, 2014).

Self-talk is a behavioral modification technique that can help alter or change the person's emotions from being harmful to being optimistic or having a positive outlook on life. With a higher self-worth level, self-talk strengthens and maintains the person's confidence level and positive perspective. Self-talk is a subset of thinking, a conversation with one's self. It makes up a person according to how he reminds or guards himself towards his welfare. Positive self-talk leads to positive feelings and confidence (Wilson, 2009). By intervening in their usual thought processes through the interjection of specific statements directed towards certain goals (Hatzigeorgiadis, 2011; Blanchfield *et al.*, 2014).

Using biblical verses as self-talk changes the person's feelings, thoughts, and behaviors, which leads him to value himself more and other people. The findings complement the study of Walter, Nikoleizig, and Alfermann (2019), who stated that self-worth concerns the person's emotions or feelings about himself. It is a generally positive image of himself that needs to be strengthened and improved. Self-talk training is encouraged to lessen anxiety and strengthen self-confidence, self-optimization, self-efficacy, and performance. It is motivational, meaning, reducing the disturbing thoughts or anxiety and increasing self-

confidence (Hatzigeorgiadis *et al.*, 2007, in Georgakaki & Karakasidou, 2017); and instructional, that is, changing the individual's cognitions and behaviors (Theodoraki *et al.*, 2000, in Sarig, 2017).

Engaging in cognitive-behavior activity or techniques like self-talk, especially *Psalms and Proverbs*, provides encouraging and inspirational thoughts, boosts confidence, and develops self-compassion. Cognitive Behavior Modification is a technique that can help the person modify his thoughts and feelings. Self-talking of constructive phrases helps boost self-worth. Positive self-talk leads to positive feelings and confidence (Wilson, 2009).

Verses taken from *Psalms and Proverbs* for frequent self-talk can give comfort and peace. Engaging in positive self-talk can ease the feeling of insecurity and fear. Some verses may be used for self-talking to provide comfort and peace and regain confidence and positive emotions. The more the person's talk is positive, the more his emotion also gets established. Self-talk, involving mental processes, regulates cognitions and changes existing thought patterns. Biblical *Psalms and Proverbs* are God's words that have the power to change emotions. "Kind words are like honey, sweet to the soul and healthy for the body" (*Proverbs* 16:24). God's words are alive and active, sharper than any double-edged sword; it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and desires (*Hebrews* 4:12).

Self-talk or monologue activities using verses in the classroom can guide students' daily thoughts and

actions and boost their confidence. In addition, familiarity with *Psalms and Proverbs* and other Biblical verses can be good sources of inspiration and encouragement.

Self-talk is an activity that may improve performance and, foremost, self-worth, which makes students more confident and knowledgeable in dealing with different challenging circumstances in life. Using *Psalms and Proverbs* as self-talk can improve their trust and faith, firstly in God.

Conclusions

The study explored the impact of self-talk using select *Psalms and Proverbs* on the participants' self-worth. In the COVID-19 pandemic, people should learn how to guard their emotions that affect their behavior. Negative feelings about oneself can lead to lower self-worth. Once the sense of self-valuing diminishes, more negative emotions prevail that fear and anxiety about any threatening circumstance take control.

Self-talk using *Psalms and Proverbs* effectively changes negative feelings into positive ones that increase or enhance self-worth. Frequent inner conversation using words that comfort and lift has a powerful impact on emotional and mental well-being. Repetitive internal monologue using affirmative words regulates or influences actions. The familiarity of Biblical verses, especially *Psalms and Proverbs*, can be good sources of inspiration and encouragement to build up confidence and self-worth.

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