

# Ego State Therapy (EST) and Systemic Desensitization (SD) to Reduce school Refusal among Senior High School Students

*by Mochamad Nursalim*

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# Ego State Therapy (EST) and Systemic Desensitization (SD) to Reduce School Refusal among Senior High School Students

Mochamad Nursalim<sup>1</sup>, Nur Hidayah<sup>2</sup>, Adi Atmoko<sup>2</sup>, Carolina L. Radjah<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Postgraduate Doctoral Student of Universitas Negeri Malang, <sup>2</sup>Faculty of Education, State University of Malang-Indonesia

## Abstract

This paper compared Ego State Therapy (EST), Systemic Desensitization (SD), and the combination of both treatments to reduce school refusal among high school students. It employed experimental approach with pretest-posttest control group design. It used Scale Revised-Child (SRS-RC). It took 40 high school students in Surabaya. The data were analyzed one-path anava. It concludes that first, school refusal declining in the subjects of experimental group which underwent EST, SD, and SDEST are significantly different from control group. Second, the three strategies tested in this research are more effective in reducing the symptoms of school refusal. Third, subjects in experiment group with SDEST strategy have sustained a decline in school refusal score greater than subjects in experiment groups which underwent single strategy

**Keywords:** Ego state therapy, desensitization, systematic, school refusal.

## Introduction

In recent decades, school refusal has attracted much interest in international research<sup>(1)</sup>. Gasparda, et al.<sup>(2)</sup> state that in modern society, the number of adolescents who refuse to go to school continues to increase. Unsuccessful school refusal lead to a great negative impact, not only on cognitive development but also on the physical and psychosocial development of children<sup>(2)</sup>. Therefore, school refusal needs to be managed immediately and appropriately as soon as possible<sup>(3)</sup>. If a student undergoes a prolonged school refusal his/her academic, personal, or social life will be disrupted.

School refusal is an emotional problem manifested by a child's unwillingness to attend school by showing a physical symptom, caused by anxiety separated from the closest person, due to a negative experience at school or

having problems in the family. Children who undergo school refusal feel uncomfortable because of anxiety about something related to school so they can lose the ability to master developmental tasks at various stages during their development<sup>(1)</sup>.

According to Kearney<sup>(4)</sup>, School refusal behavior can be seen from one or a combination of the following characteristics: a) absences from school, refuses to go to school, does not want to go to school, b) attend school but then leave it before school time is dismissed, c) Present at school but exhibit unexpected behavior, from isolation behavior, do not want to be separated from its attachment figure, aggressive, uncooperative to temper tantrum, d) presents physical complaints and other complaints (excluding physical complaints) in order to avoid him or herself to go to school.

Some children undergo school refusal due to negative experience occurred in school, while some of them is due to family issues. Also, there is a high probability of children undergo school refusal because a negative experience they obtained in school such as scolding, teasing, or bullying by their friends. Besides, some of them might feel ashamed because they are visually unattractive, overweight, too skinny, prone to fail in school.

## Corresponding Author:

**Mochamad Nursalim**

Postgraduate Doctoral student of Universitas Negeri Malang

e-mail: nursalimm632@gmail.com

School refusal has been convincingly experienced by public and private high school students in Surabaya city, this data is reinforced by previous research indicating that students who are school refusal of the country ranged between 2.5%<sup>(5)</sup>. The school refusal condition in Surabaya city is higher than the international refusal condition that is 2.4%<sup>(6)</sup>. The higher prevalence of school refusal compared internationally, suggests that school refusal is a serious problem and requires immediate and comprehensive treatment.

Meanwhile, the survey also indicate that the highest cause of school refusal of students is 50% of which occurred due to traumatic experienced by schools and teachers. It is in line with King<sup>(7)</sup>, who found that on psychological examination, many of the children who experienced school refusal had a phobic disorder. It also found that among the causes of school refusal, the most difficult to overcome, according to the school counselors, school refusal is caused by school phobia and traumatic events experienced.

Numerous counseling interventions is available to overcome school refusal problems (Ego State therapy (EST) and Systematic desensitization (SD)). Systematic Desensitization (SD) employs reciprocal inhibition principles, a fear-inducing stimulus paired with a response that block the emergence of feelings of fear. The child will gradually be confronted with a fear-inducing stimulus hierarchy while applying relaxation to make him/herself comfortable. Once the child is comfortable and the level of fear is reduced, he will be faced with a more difficult stimulus<sup>(8)</sup>. Erford<sup>(9)</sup> states that SD is a procedure in which clients repeatedly recall, imagine, or experience anxiety-generating events and then use a relaxation strategy to suppress the anxiety caused by the event. Meanwhile, EST is a method that focuses on the premise of personality that consists of separate parts called ego state or Mini Personality<sup>(10)</sup>. The purpose of ego state therapy is first, to allocate ego states where there is pain, trauma, anger or frustration, which is facilitated to be expressed, released and empowered. Second, it aims at facilitating the communication function among the ego state. Third, it aims at helping clients to recognize their ego state. Fourth, resolve conflicts within the client.

More specifically, this research also aims at combining Ego State therapy (EST) and Systematic desensitization (SD). Both EST and SD are combined to resolve a school refusal case which belongs to phobia due to traumatic experience underwent by students in school.

The traumatic memories that a person experiences are stored within the subcortical brain region-the subconscious. According to Barabasz & Barabasz<sup>(11)</sup>, when a person experiences trauma, memory associated with trauma events will stick in the brain in a non-verbal, unconscious and very-difficult-to-access section. This area can not be reached by cognitive-behavioral counseling, but can only be reached by EST. The combination of EST and SD is intended to help students who experience school refusal comprehensively. On the one hand, students need to be assisted in overcoming trauma experienced by using EST, while EST and SD are used to overcome fear of subject teachers both imaginary and in vivo. In essence, the combination of EST and SD, or SDEST (Systematic Desensitization and Ego State therapy) as an intervention strategy that seeks to constructively construct traumatic memories and increase the courage of the counselee to face current and future realities .

## Method

It was an experimental research with *pretest-posttest control group design*. Senior High School Students in Surabaya undergoing school refusal were taken as research subject. It obtained 40 students as research subject and divided into four groups which consisted of 10 students in each group. One group of student was given an Ego State Therapy (EST), one group of student was given Systematic Desensitization (SD), one group of student was given combination of Systematic Desensitization (SD) and Ego State Therapy (EST)= SDEST, and one group of student was a control group with no treatment. This research utilized school refusal Revised-Child (SRS-RC) developed by Haight, et.all.<sup>(12)</sup>.

The experiment was conducted by ten school counselors who obtained a training regarding EST, SD, and SDEST. The experiment was conducted six sessions which each sessions took 60 minutes. In addition, it was conducted individually and privately in counseling room. The data obtained during experiment were then analyzed by using descriptive statistic analysis and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA).

## Results

The analysis results of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) regarding the obtained score from group with EST treatment, group with SD treatment, group SDEST treatment, and control group are presented in the following Table.

**Table 1: One-way Analysis of Variance Results**

Source	JK	db	RK	F	R <sup>2</sup>	P
Between A	23.9121	3	7.970699	32, 149	0.728	0.000
within	8, 925402	36	247, 928	--	--	--
Total	32, 837500	39	--	--	--	--

The score of F between A = 32,149 db = 3. 36 p = 0.000. Results of significance test indicate that the difference average of posttest score of school refusal scale among groups with EST, SD, SDEST, and control group are significant. The average score of group which treated by SD (A1) is 30.100, group which treated by EST (A2) is 25.300, group which treated by SDEST is 10.000, while the control group (A4) obtained 75.600.

According to the average score of posttest in school refusal scale among the four groups examined, the differences are significant. It further affirms that the proposed hypothesis in this research is accepted.

The following tables present the average score of each group and the results of T test among groups after giving treatment.

**Table 2: Variabel T-test between groups**

Groups	X (Posttest)	p
A1(SD) – A2 (EST)	0.682	0.507
A1(SD) – A3 (SDEST)	2.854	0.007
A1 (SD)– A4 (Control)	-6.462	0.000
A2 (EST)– A3 (SDEST)	2.173	0.034
A2 (EST)– A4 (Control)	-7.143	0.000
A3(SDEST) – A4 (Control)	-9.316	0.000

Based on t-test among treatment it can be seen that: the value of t A1-A2 = 0.682 db = 36 p = 0.253 for one tail. Significance test: the mean difference of the school refusal score between the groups treated with SD and EST was significant. So it can be concluded that between groups treated with SD and EST obtained a similar outcome in decreasing the school refusal.

The value of t A1-A3 = 2.854 db = 36 p = 0.0035 for one tail. Significance test: difference of mean score of school refusal between group treated by SD (A1) and group that got combination treatment of Ego State therapy and Systematic desensitization (SDEST) (A3) is significant. So it can be concluded that the school refusal of group with SDEST was highly decreased compare to a group treated by SD. The value of t A1-A4 = -6.462 db = 36 p = 0.000 for one tail. The significance test of mean difference of school refusal between groups with Systematic desensitization (SD) and control group is significant. The value of t A2-A3 = 2.173 db = 36 p = 0.017 is for one tail. The significance test of mean difference of school refusal between groups with EST and the combination of Ego State therapy and Systematic desensitization (SDEST) is significant.

Based on the t test above, it can be summarized that the group treated with Ego State therapy and Systematic desensitization (SDEST) combination counseling strategies have a greater decrease in school refusal level compared to the group receiving Ego State therapy and Systematic desensitization (SD) separately.

Thus the hypothesis which states that “the combination of Ego State therapy and Systematic desensitization (SDEST) is more effective than separated treatment to handle school refusal among students “. To report the results of descriptive analysis, it was taken from school refusal score data, both the score before treatment and the score after treatment. The following is a graph showing refusal school scores of research subjects at the size before and after treatment

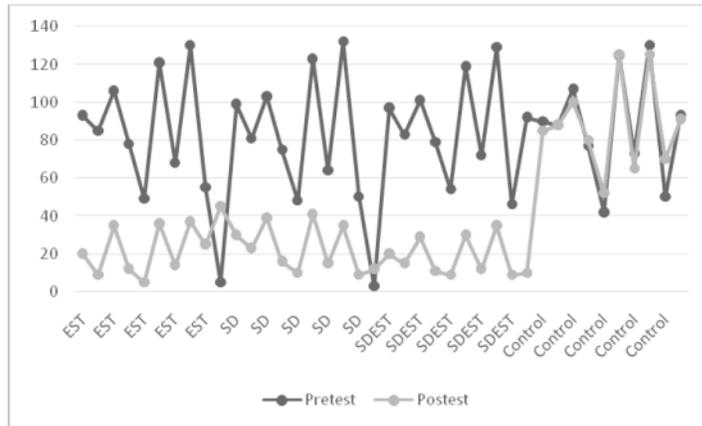


Figure 1. Scores school refusal pre and posttreatment

According to the graphic above, the counselees’ score who obtained treatment (EST, SD, SDEST) before and after undergoing treatment is decreasing. On the other hand, within control group, some subjects’ score decreased, while some others not and even increased.

**Discussion**

According to the analysis results of the obtained data from the four groups after undergoing treatment, it is found that the score of each group (EST, SD, SDEST, and control group) is different significantly. Additionally, EST, SD, and SDEST are confirmed successfully in reducing subjects’ school refusal. This promote the findings revealed by Lee and Miltenberger<sup>(13)</sup>, and Kearney and Silverman<sup>(14)</sup>. These initial research affirms that SD is an effective strategy to manage school refusal within children, particularly because of phobia in school. Also, it affirms that EST is able to manage effectively traumatic syndrome such as post traumatic stress disorder and acute stress disorder<sup>(11)</sup>. In addition, ego state therapy is effective to handle individual’s trauma<sup>(15)</sup>.

The decreasing of school refusal score average in experiment classes indicates that the treatments tested, EST, SD, and combination of Ego State Therapy (EST) and Systemic Desensitization (SDEST) in this study were successful in managing school refusal of the children.

The results of subsequent analysis indicate that the group treated with combination of EST and SD (SDEST) experienced a greater decreasing of school

refusal compare with single treatment of both EST and SD. Both groups treated with single EST and SD experienced similar results in school refusal score. Hence, hypothesis stating that “Combined treatment of EST and SD is more effective than single treatment in managing students’ school refusal” is accepted.

Among the three strategies tested in this research (EST, SD, SDEST), SDEST or the combination of both EST and SD is the most effective strategy which is able to manage significantly students’ school refusal. SDEST is effective to manage significantly school refusal because it is able to comprehensively construct past memories in a positive approach and promote counselees’ courage in facing recent and upcoming events in an adaptive way.

In previous research, some scholars and researchers have attempted to combine systemic desensitization (SD) with other strategies. Iglesias and Iglesias<sup>(16)</sup> conducted a research by combining hypnosis and SD to reduce specific phobia, Ventis<sup>(17)</sup> combine SD and humour to reduce anxiety. While Poorgholami and Fatehi<sup>(18)</sup> examined combination of systemic desensitization and study-skills training to reduce students’ anxiety during test. Also, Rajiah<sup>(19)</sup> combined psychoeducation strategy and systemic desensitization to reduce students’ anxiety during test.

The combination done in this research was following the combination of the previous research, a combination done by Iglesias and Iglesias<sup>(16)</sup>. They have combined hypnosis and systemic desensitization. The combination model is in the form of suggestion which is part of

hypnosis given to the counselee during hierarchical scene. Ventis<sup>(17)</sup> has combined systemic desensitization and humour. Combination model arranged by Ventis is identical by Iglesias and Iglesias who merge humour within systematic desensitization.

### Conclusion

The research affirm that the decline of school refusal experimental are significantly different from control group. Second, the three strategies tested in this research (ST, SD, and SDEST) are more capable in reducing the symptoms of school refusal. Third, subjects in experiment group with SDEST strategy have sustained a decline in school refusal score greater than subjects in experiment groups which underwent single strategy. This research further implies that SDEST is the most feasible and remarkably effective strategy in managing school refusal. Fourth, SDEST offers numerous benefits to the counselee and provides less obstacles during the process.

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**Ethical Clearance:** We/I, the undersigned researcher(s) have read the Malang State University's Guidelines for Ethical Review of Research Involving Humans and agree to abide by them in the conduct of this research. It is understood that this includes the reporting and monitoring roles associated with the approval by Indonesian Guidance and Counseling Association.

**Conflict of Interest:** The research being reported in this publication was supported by Malang State University. The author(s) of this publication, has equity ownership in, which is developing products related to the research being reported. The terms of this arrangement have been reviewed and approved by Malang State University in accordance with its policy on objectivity in research.

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