

## Original Paper

# Comparison of attachment styles and coping strategies in irritable bowel syndrome and healthy female students

Sobhani Shahmirzadi M (MD)\*<sup>1</sup>, Mirzaeian B (PhD)<sup>2</sup>, Mansoori M (MA)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of pediatric, Golestan University of Medical Sciences, Gorgan, Iran.

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Sari Branch, Sari, Iran. <sup>3</sup>General Psychology.

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## Abstract

**Background and Objective:** The relation between stress and gastrointestinal diseases, particularly irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), has received consideration for years. This research was conducted to compare the attachment styles and coping strategies in IBS and healthy female students.

**Materials and Methods:** This case – control study was conducted on 50 female students with irritable bowel syndrome and 50 healthy students in Gorgan, Iran during 2011. Age, grade and major were similar in both cases and controls. ROME III criteria questionnaire, together with a physician report confirmation were used to diagnose IBS. All attendants in the study filled in RASS adult attachment scale questionnaire and Lazarus coping strategies questionnaire. Data were analyzed using SPSS-17 and student t-test.

**Results:** In the IBS group the level of ambivalent ( $9.78 \pm 2.72$ ) and avoidance ( $7.68 \pm 1.76$ ) attachments were higher than the control group ( $8.1 \pm 2.65$  and  $6.56 \pm 1.82$  respectively) ( $P < 0.05$ ). The most prevalent attachment style in control group was the secure style ( $11 \pm 3.89$ ). There was a significant statistical difference between female of IBS group and control group regarding the mean  $\pm$  SD of coping strategies including: isolation ( $7.04 \pm 2.44$ ,  $5.9 \pm 1.95$ ), self-control ( $9.62 \pm 2.39$ ,  $8.32 \pm 1.6$ ), demanding social support ( $5.54 \pm 1.6$ ,  $6.92 \pm 2.42$ ), evasion – avoidance ( $9.64 \pm 2.81$ ,  $6.8 \pm 1.37$ ), solving the problem ( $8.2 \pm 1.85$ ,  $6.66 \pm 1.7$ ), re-evaluation ( $16.2 \pm 1.81$ ,  $14.3 \pm 1.61$ ) and taking responsibility ( $5.67 \pm 1.41$ ,  $4.5 \pm 1.58$ ) ( $P < 0.05$ ). the direct coping strategy in IBS and control groups was  $63.76 \pm 9.76$  and  $67.58 \pm 10.78$ . This difference was not significant.

**Conclusion:** This study showed that in comparison to healthy female students, subjects with IBS use more ambivalent and avoidant attachment styles.

**Keywords:** Coping skills, Attachment styles, IBS, female

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\* Corresponding Author: Sobhani Shahmirzadi M (MD), E-mail: [sobha48@yahoo.com](mailto:sobha48@yahoo.com)

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