

## Irritable Bowel Syndrome: A Case Study

Nadia Sutanto and Edgar Jeremy  
Faculty of Psychology  
Universitas Surabaya

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is a functional disorder marked by some gastrointestinal symptoms frequently associated with extradigestive symptoms with unknown organic causes. In this study the authors investigated whether IBS causes psychological symptoms or vice versa. Data were collected through an in-depth interview (anamnesis), a hetero-anamnesis, and the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-21). The subject was a 20-year-old student (D) diagnosed with IBS since the age of 15. Results showed that the subject had an extremely severe anxiety and stress, and moderate depression. The main obstacle faced by the subject was his escape-avoidance coping strategies which were not appropriately applied in solving problems. This situated the subject in a vicious cycle between recurrent IBS, helplessness, avoidance of responsibility, and anxious/stressful conditions. The subject's type of personality which tended to be introverted and neurotic made him experience difficulties in overcoming psychosocial stressors, such as academic demands and lack of social relationships. The psychological factors influenced the psychological states of the subject that resulted in the recurrence of IBS.

*Keywords:* irritable bowel syndrome, depression, anxiety, stress

*Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)* adalah gangguan fungsional yang ditandai beberapa gejala gastrointestinal yang sering diasosiasikan dengan gejala *extradigestive* dengan penyebab organik yang belum diketahui. Dalam studi ini para penulis meneliti apakah faktor psikologi meningkatkan gejala IBS atau sebaliknya. Studi ini mengumpulkan data melalui wawancara (auto-anamnesis, hetero-anamnesis), dan data terkait faktor-faktor psikologis. Data didukung *Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS21)*. Subjek adalah mahasiswa (D) berusia 20 tahun yang telah didiagnosis menderita IBS sejak berusia 15 tahun. Hasil menunjukkan subjek memiliki kecemasan dan stres amat ekstrem, serta depresi yang moderat. Kendala utama subjek adalah strategi  *coping escape-avoidance*  yang tidak tepat dalam menyelesaikan masalah. Situasi ini membuat subjek terjebak dalam "lingkaran tak berujung pangkal" antara kambuhnya gejala IBS, keputusan, penghindaran tanggung jawab, dan kecemasan/stres. Tipe kepribadian subjek yang cenderung introvert dan neurotik membuatnya semakin sulit mengatasi stresor psikososial berupa tuntutan akademik dan kurangnya relasi sosial subjek dan teman-temannya. Faktor-faktor psikologis tersebut berpengaruh pada keadaan psikologis subjek yang berakibat pada munculnya gejala IBS secara berulang kali.

*Kata kunci:* irritable bowel syndrome, depresi, kecemasan, stres

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is a chronic condition in the digestive system (Ford, Brandt, Young, Chey, Foxx-Orenstein, & Moayyedi, 2009; Fukudo et al., 2015; Thompson, 2016; & Wald, 2016) that is accompanied by abdominal pain, discomfort associated with defecation, and the sensation of bloating (Chey, Kurlander, & Eswaran, 2015; Makharia, Catassi, & Makharia, 2015; & Thompson, 2016).

Pathophysiologically, this is caused by several conditions, including abnormality in the spontaneity of digestive performance, sensations related to internal organs (particularly the intestines), brain-gut interactions, excess mucus production in the intestines that activates immunity, increase in intestinal absorption, tolerance to certain foods, exposure to infections, antibiotic consumption, psychosocial distress (early-life abuse/stressors), and perception of pain (Thompson, 2016; Chey, Kurlander, & Eswaran, 2015). Tosic-Golubovic, Miljkovic, Nagorni,

---

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Nadia Sutanto, Faculty of Psychology Universitas Surabaya, Jalan Raya Rungkut Mejoyo, Surabaya 60293. Email: namaku.nadia@gmail.com