

The Relationship between Self-Compassion and Treatment Fatigue in Chronic Kidney Failure Patients Undergoing Hemodialysis

Asri Bashir¹, Chairul Huda¹, Luluk Nafisah¹, Desti Kurnia Utami¹, Imam Ghozali¹,
Muhammad Ikhsan², Safrullah²

¹Universitas Sriwijaya, Palembang, Indonesia

²STIKes Medika Nurul Islam, Aceh, Indonesia

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Correspondence

E-mail : asribashir@unsri.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Patients with chronic kidney failure undergoing hemodialysis face physical and emotional stress due to long-term therapy. This condition often causes treatment fatigue, which is physical and psychological fatigue that can reduce motivation and adherence to treatment. One of the psychological factors that can help overcome this fatigue is self-compassion, which is the ability to accept yourself with empathy and be loving to yourself. Patients with good levels of self-compassion generally have higher emotional resilience and more positive adaptability. The purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between self-compassion and treatment fatigue in chronic kidney failure patients undergoing hemodialysis. This study uses a descriptive design of correlation with a cross-sectional approach. A total of 60 patients undergoing hemodialysis for at least six months were selected through purposive sampling. Results of this study Most of the respondents were male (56.7%), aged 41–55 years (48.3%), and had undergone hemodialysis for more than two years (66.6%). Based on the level of self-compassion, the majority of respondents were in the medium category (63.3%), while for treatment fatigue, most were also in the medium category (66.7%). The results of the statistical test showed that there was a significant negative relationship between self-compassion and treatment fatigue ($r = -0.471$; $p = 0.001$). This means that the higher the patient's self-compassion, the lower the level of treatment fatigue felt. In conclusion, there was a significant negative relationship between self-compassion and treatment fatigue in patients with chronic kidney failure undergoing hemodialysis.

INTRODUCTION

Chronic kidney failure (CKD) is one of the non-communicable diseases that requires long-term therapy and has a wide impact on the lives of sufferers. This condition occurs due to a progressive and permanent decline in kidney function, so that the body is no longer able to remove metabolic waste substances effectively. Patients with late-stage GSK require regular hemodialysis therapy to maintain fluid and electrolyte balance. However, the therapeutic process carried out two to three times every week in the long term creates a significant physical and emotional burden (World Health Organization (WHO), 2024; Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024).

Repeated hemodialysis procedures make patients must adjust their lifestyle, such as limiting fluids, changing diet, and limiting physical activity. Such routines can lead to complex feelings of fatigue, both physically and psychologically. This condition is known as treatment fatigue, which is a state of fatigue due to the length of the therapy process and the demands of continuous treatment. Treatment fatigue can reduce patient motivation, interfere with adherence to therapy schedules, and reduce quality of life (Nolte et al., 2021; Hidayat & Putri, 2024). In the long term, this fatigue can also increase the risk of emotional stress and worsen the patient's clinical condition (Shin et al., 2023).

In addition to physical exhaustion, kidney failure patients also face emotional distress due to lifestyle changes, dependence on dialysis machines, and uncertainty about the future. Many patients feel lost control of their bodies, feel financially burdened, and experience chronic anxiety. If these psychological

conditions are not managed properly, it can exacerbate treatment fatigue and reduce the enthusiasm to continue therapy (Park et al., 2024; Huang & Chien, 2025). Therefore, psychological factors are needed that can help patients adapt healthily to the chronic conditions they are facing.

One of the psychological factors that is believed to strengthen patients' adaptability is self-compassion. Self-compassion is the ability to treat oneself with empathy, accept self-suffering as part of the human experience, and not over-judge oneself (Neff, 2020; Durkin et al., 2022). Individuals with high levels of self-compassion tend to forgive, think realistically, and focus on recovery rather than blaming circumstances. In the context of chronic patients, self-compassion can help a person accept their condition more calmly and reduce the psychological stress that comes with long-term therapy (Zhao & Xu, 2024).

Previous research has shown that self-compassion is negatively associated with emotional exhaustion, stress, and burnout in patients with chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes, and autoimmunity (Park & Kim, 2024; Huang & Chien, 2025). Patients with high self-compassion tend to be better able to maintain emotional balance and maintain motivation towards therapy. However, research that specifically examines the relationship between self-compassion and treatment fatigue in patients with chronic kidney failure is still limited, especially in Indonesia. In fact, understanding the relationship between these two variables is important to develop nursing interventions that are oriented towards improving the psychological well-being of patients (Hidayat & Putri, 2024).

In nursing practice, nurses not only play a role in providing physical care but also support the psychosocial aspects of patients. Through educational and emotional interventions, nurses can help patients build an attitude of compassion towards themselves so that they are better able to accept their illness positively. These efforts can contribute to reducing treatment fatigue levels and improving overall quality of life.

METHOD

This study used a descriptive correlation design with a cross-sectional approach to determine the relationship between *self-compassion* and *treatment fatigue* in chronic kidney failure patients undergoing hemodialysis. The research was conducted at the Hemodialysis Unit of the Tgk. Chik di Tiro Regional General Hospital from January to March 2025. The population in this study is all patients with chronic kidney failure who undergo routine hemodialysis therapy with an active population of 80 people. Sampling was carried out using purposive sampling techniques, with inclusion criteria namely patients aged ≥ 18 years, undergoing hemodialysis for at least six months, able to communicate in Indonesian, and willing to be respondents by signing an *informed consent* sheet), while the exclusion criteria include patients with medically unstable conditions, severe cognitive impairment, or

active mental disorders. Based on the calculation of the Slovin formula with an error rate of 5%, a sample of 60 respondents was obtained. Data collection was carried out using two standardized instruments, namely the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) developed by Neff (2020) to measure the level of self-compassion, consisting of 26 items with six main dimensions (*self-kindness, self-judgment, common humanity, isolation, mindfulness, and over-identification*), and the Treatment Fatigue Scale (TFS) adapted from Hidayat and Putri (2024) to measure the level of physical and emotional fatigue experienced by patients during long-term therapy. Both instruments use a Likert scale of 1–5 and have been tested for validity and reliability with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.89 for SCS and 0.86 for TFS, respectively. Prior to the main data collection, trials were conducted on 20 patients outside the study sample to ensure language comprehension and cultural context suitability. The collected data were then analyzed using the Spearman Rank Correlation test with a significance level of 0.05 to determine the relationship between *self-compassion* and *treatment fatigue* in chronic kidney failure patients undergoing hemodialysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of a study that has been conducted on 60 respondents in chronic kidney failure patients undergoing hemodialysis, the results are as follows.

Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents (n = 60)

Characteristics	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Man	34	56,7
	Woman	26	43,3
Age	26-40	18	30,0
	41-55	29	48,3
	>55	13	21,7
Long Undergoing Hemodialysis	<1 Year	10	16,7
	1-2 Years	10	16,7
	>2 years	40	66,6
Final Education	Elementary (Elementary-Junior High)	7	11,7

Middle (SMA)	29	48,3
Tinggi (Diploma-S1)	24	40,0

Source: Research primary data, 2025

Most respondents were male (56.5%) with the highest age range between 41–55 years (47.8%) and had undergone hemodialysis for more than two years (67.4%). This illustrates that patients who undergo long-term therapy have a higher potential to experience *treatment fatigue* due to routine and repetitive treatment processes (Nolte et al., 2021; Hidayat & Putri, 2024).

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of Self-Compassion and Treatment Fatigue Levels (n = 60)

Characteristics	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Self-Compassion	Tall	11	18,3
	Keep	38	63,3
	Low	11	18,3
Treatment Fatigue	Tall	14	23,3
	Keep	40	66,7
	Low	6	10,0

Source: Research primary data, 2025

The results showed that most of the respondents had moderate levels of self-compassion (63.3%) and moderate treatment fatigue (66.7%). This suggests that most patients can adapt to their chronic conditions but still experience physical and

emotional exhaustion due to long-term therapy (Park & Kim, 2024). Patients with low self-compassion tend to feel frustrated, self-blame, and are more prone to emotional exhaustion (Zhao & Xu, 2024).

Table 3. Relationship between Self-Compassion and Treatment Fatigue in Hemodialysis Patients (n = 60)

Variabel	r	p-value	Information
Self-Compassion ↔ Treatment Fatigue	–0.471	–0.471	Signifikan (p < 0.05)

Statistical Test: Spearman Rank Correlation Source
Primary data of the study, 2025.

Based on the Spearman Rank correlation test, a value of $r = -0.471$ with $p = 0.001$ ($p < 0.05$) was obtained, indicating that there was a significant negative relationship between *self-compassion* and *treatment fatigue* in patients with chronic kidney failure undergoing hemodialysis. This means that the higher the patient's self-compassion, the lower the level of fatigue due to therapy. These results support the theory of Neff (2020) who explains that self-compassion functions as an emotional regulation mechanism that can reduce stress and chronic fatigue.

The results showed that there was a significant negative relationship between

self-compassion and treatment fatigue ($r = -0.471$; $p = 0.001$) in patients with chronic kidney failure undergoing hemodialysis. These findings suggest that the higher a person's level of self-compassion, the lower the level of physical and emotional fatigue experienced during long-term therapy. This is in accordance with Neff (2020's) theory which states that self-compassion acts as an emotional regulation mechanism that helps individuals accept their suffering and limitations without overblaming themselves. In the context of chronic kidney failure patients, the ability to view themselves with compassion helps them reduce psychological stress and strengthen emotional resilience in the face of grueling therapy routines (Huang & Chien, 2025).

Most of the respondents in the study had moderate levels of self-compassion, which indicates a moderate ability to manage stress from chronic medication. Patients with higher self-compassion generally have a positive view of the treatment process, viewing hemodialysis therapy as part of life-sustaining efforts, rather than a painful burden. This is consistent with research by Park and Kim (2024) who found that self-compassion can increase adherence to treatment because patients are more accepting of their disease conditions and do not feel hopeless easily. This attitude also helps patients minimize the psychological fatigue that arises due to physical limitations and social pressures that accompany long-term therapy.

The phenomenon of treatment fatigue that appears in most patients in the medium to high category shows that treatment fatigue is still a major problem in the treatment of chronic kidney failure patients. Prolonged fatigue comes not only from the hemodialysis process itself, but also from dietary demands, fluid restriction, and dependence on health facilities (Nolte et al., 2021). Self-compassion in this case can serve as a psychological resource that balances the emotional burden. By being gentle with oneself and acknowledging suffering as normal, patients can reduce the tendency to feel guilty or frustrated over perceived limitations (Durkin et al., 2022).

From a nursing perspective, the results of this study confirm the importance of integrating psychological interventions into routine clinical practice. Nurses not only play a role in physiological monitoring, but also in providing emotional support and psychosocial education to patients.

Self-compassion-based interventions such as mindfulness-based self-compassion training have been shown to be effective in reducing stress and increasing self-acceptance in patients with chronic diseases (Shin et al., 2023). In practice, nurses can implement this approach through brief education, directed

self-reflection, and the creation of an empathetic therapeutic environment.

In addition, the results of this study reinforce the importance of a holistic nursing approach, in which the biological, psychological, and social aspects of the patient are considered simultaneously. Fatigue due to hemodialysis is often multidimensional—involving biological factors such as anemia and electrolyte imbalances, as well as psychological factors such as stress, depression, and low self-compassion (WHO, 2024; Zhao & Xu, 2024). Thus, increased self-compassion not only helps reduce emotional distress, but also has the potential to improve physiological balance through a decrease in chronic stress that impacts the patient's immune and metabolic systems.

Finally, these findings have important practical implications for the development of nursing interventions in hemodialysis units. Self-compassion training programs tailored to the Indonesian cultural context can be part of routine psychosocial care for patients with chronic kidney failure. This approach is expected to reduce treatment fatigue, increase adherence to therapy schedules, and strengthen the overall quality of life of patients. Nurses play the role of main facilitators in teaching self-acceptance, empathy, and stress management skills so that patients can face hemodialysis therapy with a more positive and resilient attitude (Hidayat & Putri, 2024; Huang & Chien, 2025).

Based on the Spearman Rank correlation test, a value of $r = -0.471$ with $p = 0.001$ ($p < 0.05$) was obtained, indicating that there was a significant negative relationship between *self-compassion* and *treatment fatigue* in patients with chronic kidney failure undergoing hemodialysis. This means that the higher the patient's self-compassion, the lower the level of fatigue due to therapy. These results support the theory of Neff (2020) who explains that self-compassion functions as an emotional

regulation mechanism that can reduce stress and chronic fatigue.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study showed that there was a significant negative relationship between *self-compassion* and *treatment fatigue* in patients with chronic kidney failure undergoing hemodialysis at Hospital X. Patients with higher levels of self-compassion tended to have lower levels of physical and emotional fatigue in undergoing long-term therapy. These results confirm that *self-compassion* plays an important role as a protective factor in patients' psychological adaptation to chronic treatment. From a nursing perspective, increasing *self-compassion* can be used as a nursing intervention strategy that focuses on strengthening the psychological aspects of patients, to reduce *treatment fatigue* levels and improve quality of life. Therefore, *self-compassion-based* interventions such as empathy education, *mindfulness*, and self-acceptance counseling need to be developed and implemented on an ongoing basis in the nursing practice of hemodialysis patients.

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