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# The Effect of Dogmatic Thinking on Emotional Creativity: The Mediating Role of Self-Compassion in University Students

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A B S T R A C T

The aim of the present study was to examine the effect of dogmatic thinking on emotional creativity, considering the mediating role of self-compassion, among students at the Islamic Azad University, Neka Branch. This study was applied in terms of purpose. In terms of data collection, it was field-based, and regarding data gathering and analysis, it was descriptive and correlational, using a structural equation modeling approach. The statistical population included all students of the Islamic Azad University, Neka Branch, in the 2024–2025 academic year (N = 1,935). To determine the sample size, the Krejcie and Morgan table was used, and 321 students were selected through stratified random sampling based on academic level. The data collection instruments comprised three standard questionnaires: the Dogmatic Thinking Questionnaire by Younesi and Mirafzal (2008), the Emotional Creativity Questionnaire by Averill and Thomas-Knowles (1991), and the Self-Compassion Scale by Neff (2003). Data were analyzed in two parts: descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, and charts) and inferential statistics (the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test and structural equation modeling) using SPSS and AMOS software. The results indicated that dogmatic thinking affects emotional creativity and self-compassion in students. In addition, self-compassion affects emotional creativity in students. Furthermore, the findings showed that self-compassion mediates the relationship between dogmatic thinking and emotional creativity in students.

***Keywords:*** *dogmatic thinking; emotional creativity; self-compassion.*

## 1. Introduction

Creativity has long been regarded as a core psychological capacity that enables individuals to adapt to complex, uncertain, and rapidly changing environments. In contemporary psychological literature, creativity is no longer conceptualized solely as a cognitive ability related to problem solving or artistic production; rather, it is increasingly understood as a multidimensional construct that encompasses emotional, motivational, and interpersonal components (Runco & Pritzker, 2020). Among these dimensions, *emotional creativity* has received growing scholarly attention due to its central role in emotional regulation, psychological well-being, and adaptive functioning in everyday life. Emotional creativity refers to an individual's ability to experience, express, and integrate emotions in novel, authentic, and effective ways (Averill & Thomas-Knowles, 1991). This form of creativity is particularly salient in academic contexts, where students are required not only to manage academic demands but also to navigate emotional challenges related to identity development, stress, interpersonal relationships, and future uncertainty (Hurabarat et al., 2023).

University students constitute a population that is especially vulnerable to emotional strain, cognitive rigidity, and psychological distress. Academic pressure, career uncertainty, and social transitions can constrain emotional expression and flexibility, thereby undermining emotional creativity (Sahu, 2020). Recent studies suggest that emotional creativity is positively associated with academic vitality, psychological well-being, and adaptive coping strategies among students (Boeiry et al., 2024; Li & Wu, 2025). Consequently, identifying psychological factors that enhance or inhibit emotional creativity has become an important research priority within educational and positive psychology.

One cognitive factor that has been consistently linked to reduced flexibility and maladaptive emotional functioning is *dogmatic or deterministic thinking*. Dogmatic thinking refers to a rigid cognitive style characterized by absolute judgments, black-and-white evaluations, resistance to ambiguity, and an intolerance of alternative perspectives (Younesi & Mirafzal, 2007; Zalevskii, 2021). Individuals with high levels of dogmatic thinking tend to perceive experiences through fixed mental schemas, which limits their capacity for cognitive and emotional openness (Smith & Rodriguez, 2021). In educational settings, such rigid thinking patterns have been associated with difficulties in abstract reasoning, creative problem-solving, and emotional regulation (Altarawneh & Alkhateeb, 2024; Mutiani et al., 2021).

From a cognitive–emotional perspective, dogmatic thinking constrains emotional creativity by restricting emotional exploration and reducing tolerance for emotional complexity (Johnson & Mitchell, 2023). Emotional creativity requires the capacity to engage with contradictory feelings, reinterpret emotional experiences, and generate original emotional responses. However, absolutist cognitive frameworks discourage such exploration by imposing fixed interpretations of emotional events (Robinson & Taylor, 2023). Empirical evidence suggests that individuals who rely heavily on deterministic thinking strategies are less likely to demonstrate emotional novelty and authenticity, two core components of emotional creativity (Anderson & Miller, 2024; Pan et al., 2023).

In addition to its direct effects on creativity, dogmatic thinking has been shown to negatively influence self-related emotional processes, particularly *self-compassion*. Self-compassion is defined as a healthy, nonjudgmental stance toward oneself in times of failure, suffering, or inadequacy and consists of three interrelated components: self-kindness versus self-judgment, common humanity versus isolation, and mindfulness versus over-identification (Neff, 2003). Individuals high in self-compassion respond to personal difficulties with understanding and emotional balance rather than harsh self-criticism (López & Schroevers, 2018). This construct has emerged as a key protective factor against stress, anxiety, and emotional dysregulation among university students (Chan et al., 2022; Tran et al., 2022).

Rigid and absolutist thinking patterns are fundamentally incompatible with self-compassion. Dogmatic thinkers often interpret mistakes as personal failures and view emotional distress as unacceptable, which intensifies self-judgment and emotional suppression (Thompson & Evans, 2020). Research indicates that absolutist and deterministic cognitive styles are negatively associated with self-compassion and psychological flexibility (O'Donnell & Michalak, 2020; Pyszkowska & Rönnlund, 2021). Conversely, flexible and open thinking styles foster greater emotional acceptance and compassionate self-awareness (Ukolova et al., 2020). Anderson and Miller (Anderson & Miller, 2024) further demonstrated that absolutist thinking undermines self-compassion by reinforcing inflexible self-evaluative standards, thereby increasing vulnerability to emotional distress.



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The relationship between self-compassion and emotional creativity has been increasingly emphasized in recent empirical studies. Self-compassion creates an internal emotional climate that encourages curiosity, openness, and emotional exploration—conditions that are essential for emotional creativity (Neff & Tóth, 2022). Individuals who are kind to themselves are more willing to experiment with emotions, tolerate emotional ambiguity, and express authentic emotional responses without fear of self-criticism (Matos et al., 2021). Empirical evidence suggests that self-compassion positively predicts emotional creativity and serves as a psychological resource that enhances adaptive emotional functioning (Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2021; Robinson & Taylor, 2023).

Moreover, self-compassion has been identified as a mediator in various psychological models linking cognitive styles to emotional and mental health outcomes. For example, Neff and Tóth (Neff & Tóth, 2022) demonstrated that self-compassion mediates the relationship between emotional creativity and mental health indicators, suggesting that compassionate self-relating enhances the beneficial effects of emotional creativity. Similarly, Kotera et al. (Kotera et al., 2023) found that self-compassion moderates motivational pathways among graduate students, highlighting its central role in self-regulatory processes. These findings imply that self-compassion may function as a psychological mechanism through which cognitive patterns influence emotional outcomes.

Despite the growing body of research on emotional creativity, dogmatic thinking, and self-compassion, there remains a notable gap in the literature regarding the integrative examination of these variables within a single structural framework. While previous studies have independently linked dogmatic thinking to reduced creativity (Johnson & Mitchell, 2023; Pan et al., 2023) and self-compassion to enhanced emotional functioning (Chan et al., 2022; Robinson & Taylor, 2023), fewer studies have explicitly tested the mediating role of self-compassion in the relationship between dogmatic thinking and emotional creativity. Addressing this gap is particularly important in higher education contexts, where fostering emotional creativity and psychological resilience is essential for student well-being and academic success (Li & Wu, 2025; Onishchuk et al., 2020).

Furthermore, contemporary educational environments are increasingly shaped by rapid technological, social, and cultural changes that demand flexible thinking and emotional adaptability (Zahedi Moghaddam & Doulikhani, 2025). In such contexts, rigid cognitive styles may hinder students' ability to engage creatively and compassionately with themselves and others. Understanding how self-compassion can buffer the negative effects of dogmatic thinking on emotional creativity may inform the design of psychological and educational interventions aimed at promoting adaptive emotional development among university students (Anic & Dahlenburg, 2025; Casaló et al., 2021).

In light of these considerations, the present study seeks to contribute to the existing literature by examining a structural model in which dogmatic thinking predicts emotional creativity both directly and indirectly through self-compassion. By focusing on university students, this research addresses a population that is both developmentally sensitive and educationally significant. The findings of this study are expected to offer theoretical insights into the cognitive–emotional mechanisms underlying emotional creativity and practical implications for enhancing student well-being and creative emotional engagement within academic settings.

Therefore, the aim of the present study was to investigate the effect of dogmatic thinking on emotional creativity with the mediating role of self-compassion among students of the Islamic Azad University, Neka Branch.

## 2. Methods and Materials

### *2.1. Study Design and Participants*

The present study was applied in terms of purpose and falls within descriptive research because it examines the existing status; moreover, given that it investigates the effect of dogmatic thinking on emotional creativity with the mediating role of self-compassion among students of the Islamic Azad University, Neka Branch, it is a correlational study based on structural equation modeling (SEM). The statistical population comprised all students of the Islamic Azad University, Neka Branch, in the 2024–2025 academic year (N = 1,935). Based on the Krejcie and Morgan table, a sample of 321 students was selected using stratified random sampling according to academic level.

### *2.2. Measures*

The Dogmatic Thinking Questionnaire by Younesi and Mirafzal (2007) is a 36-item questionnaire developed to assess the level of dogmatic thinking. The Dogmatic Thinking Test was constructed by Younesi and Mirafzal



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(2008). This questionnaire includes five components: (1) general dogmatism, (2) dogmatism in interpersonal interaction, (3) philosophical absolutism, (4) dogmatism in predicting the future, and (5) dogmatism regarding negative events. Items 1–7 assess general dogmatism; items 8–14 assess dogmatism in interpersonal interaction; items 15–21 assess philosophical absolutism; items 22–28 assess dogmatism in predicting the future; and items 29–36 assess dogmatism regarding negative events. Scoring is based on a four-point Likert scale: strongly agree (1), somewhat agree (2), somewhat disagree (3), and strongly disagree (4). Younesi and Bahrami (2009), in a sample of 100 participants, reported the reliability of this scale, with overall internal consistency of .82 and test–retest reliability (1-week interval) of .78.

The Emotional Creativity Questionnaire (ECQ) by Averill and Thomas-Knowles (1991) was developed and validated to assess emotional creativity. In this instrument, the four criteria are measured within four subscales: preparedness, novelty, effectiveness, and authenticity. The test contains 30 items rated on a five-point Likert scale. Specifically, 7 items assess emotional preparedness (items 1–7), 14 items assess novelty (items 8–21), 5 items assess effectiveness (items 22–26), and 4 items assess authenticity (items 27–30); two items (11 and 29) are reverse scored. Response options range from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Using Cronbach's alpha, Averill reported an internal consistency coefficient of .91 for the total emotional creativity score, and reliabilities for the subscales of preparedness, effectiveness, authenticity, and originality of .80, .89, .80, and .85, respectively. In Hashemi's study (2009), the overall reliability of the test using Cronbach's alpha was .84, and the subscale reliability coefficients for preparedness, novelty, effectiveness, and authenticity were reported as .64, .85, .71, and .71, respectively.

The Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) by Neff (2003) was used to measure self-compassion. This scale contains 26 items and six subscales: self-kindness, self-judgment, common humanity, isolation, mindfulness, and over-identification. Items 5, 12, 19, 23, and 26 constitute the self-kindness subscale; items 1, 8, 11, 16, and 21 constitute the self-judgment subscale; items 3, 7, 10, and 15 constitute the common humanity subscale; items 4, 13, 18, and 25 constitute the isolation subscale; items 9, 14, 17, and 22 constitute the mindfulness subscale; and items 2, 6, 20, and 24 constitute the over-identification subscale. The questionnaire is scored on a five-point Likert scale ranging from almost never (1) to almost always (5). Neff (2003) reported a test–retest reliability coefficient of .93 for the Self-Compassion Scale. Additionally, Yazdani and Sheikholeslami (2019) examined its reliability using Cronbach's alpha and reported an overall coefficient of .89 (Yazdani & Sheikholeslami, 2019).

Because the questionnaires used in this study are standardized, their face validity was confirmed by faculty members of the Educational Management group. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, and the coefficients were reported as .87 for the Dogmatic Thinking Questionnaire, .87 for the Emotional Creativity Questionnaire, and .83 for the Self-Compassion Scale. Because all Cronbach's alpha values exceeded .70, the questionnaires were considered reliable.

### *2.3. Data analysis*

For data analysis, descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, and charts) and inferential statistics (the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test and structural equation modeling) were used. Data were analyzed using SPSS and AMOS software. Because the study involved model testing, the data were analyzed based on structural equation modeling.

## 3. Findings and Results

As shown in Table 1, the mean values of the variables dogmatic thinking, emotional creativity, and self-compassion were 112.48, 83.72, and 76.17, respectively. The corresponding standard deviations were 28.545, 25.216, and 21.669, respectively.

**Table 1**

*Means and Standard Deviations of the Research Variables*

| Variable | Minimum Score | Maximum Score | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dogmatic thinking | 61 | 171 | 112.48 | 28.545 |
| Emotional creativity | 30 | 138 | 83.72 | 25.216 |
| Self-compassion | 31 | 122 | 76.17 | 21.669 |



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To examine the normality of the data, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was applied.

**Table 2**

*Results of the Kolmogorov–Smirnov Test*

| Variable | K–S Statistic | Significance Level (p) | Result of Distribution |
|---|---|---|---|
| Dogmatic thinking | 1.361 | .074 | Normal |
| Emotional creativity | 1.297 | .082 | Normal |
| Self-compassion | 1.123 | .099 | Normal |

Based on Table 2, variables with significance levels greater than .05 have a normal distribution ($H_0$ is accepted and $H_1$ is rejected), whereas variables with significance levels lower than .05 have a non-normal distribution ($H_1$ is accepted and $H_0$ is rejected). According to the results presented in Table 2, because the significance levels of the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test are greater than .05, it can be concluded that the data are normally distributed.

Before entering the structural equation modeling stage, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to validate each latent variable and their corresponding indicators. The final goodness-of-fit indices of the structural model, based on the AMOS software output, are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Goodness-of-Fit Indices of the Structural Model*

| Fit Index | Acceptable Standard | Obtained Value |
|---|---|---|
| $\chi^2$ / degrees of freedom | < 3 | 1.194 |
| Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) | < .08 | .025 |
| Normed Fit Index (NFI) | > .90 | .985 |
| Comparative Fit Index (CFI) | > .90 | .998 |
| Incremental Fit Index (IFI) | > .90 | .998 |
| Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) | > .80 | .959 |

As shown in Table 3, the estimated chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio is 1.194. Because values less than 3 indicate an acceptable model fit, the proposed model demonstrates a good fit. In addition, the RMSEA value is .025, and values below .08 indicate an adequate model fit. Other fit indices also support the adequacy of the model, including the Normed Fit Index (.985), Comparative Fit Index (.998), Incremental Fit Index (.998), and Goodness-of-Fit Index (.959). Given that the chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio is below 3, the RMSEA is below .08, the NFI, CFI, and IFI are above .90, and the GFI is above .80, it can be concluded that the structural model demonstrates a desirable and acceptable level of fit across all reported indices.

**Table 4**

*Results of Hypothesis Testing for Structural Paths*

| Hypothesis | Structural Path | T-value | Significance Level (p) | Standardized Path Coefficient |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| First | Dogmatic thinking → Emotional creativity | −7.046 | < .001 | −0.365 |
| Second | Dogmatic thinking → Self-compassion | −3.802 | < .001 | −0.214 |
| Third | Self-compassion → Emotional creativity | 5.892 | < .001 | 0.302 |

As shown in Table 4, the results of the structural equation modeling indicate that dogmatic thinking has a significant negative effect on emotional creativity ($\beta = -0.365$, $T = -7.046$, $p < .001$), supporting the first hypothesis. In addition, dogmatic thinking has a significant negative effect on self-compassion ($\beta = -0.214$, $T = -3.802$, $p < .001$), confirming the second hypothesis. Furthermore, self-compassion exerts a significant positive effect on emotional creativity ($\beta = 0.302$, $T = 5.892$, $p < .001$), supporting the third hypothesis. These findings collectively demonstrate the



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significant direct relationships among the study variables within the proposed structural model.

**Figure 1**

*Final Structural Model with Beta Values*

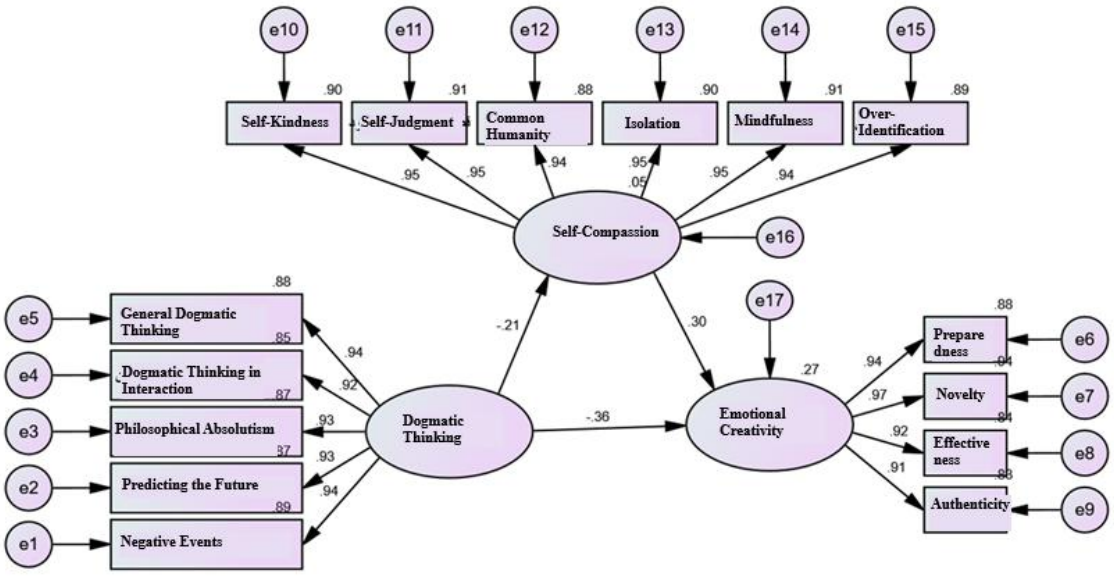


**Table 5**

*Results Related to Examining the Mediating Role of Self-Compassion in the Relationship Between Dogmatic Thinking and Emotional Creativity*

| Baron and Kenny Test Steps | Independent Variable | Mediating Variable | Dependent Variable | Path Coefficient | T-value | Significance Level (p) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Condition 1 (without mediator) | Dogmatic thinking | — | Emotional creativity | −0.429 | −8.005 | < .001 |
| Condition 2 | Dogmatic thinking | Self-compassion | — | −0.214 | −3.802 | < .001 |
| Condition 3 | — | Self-compassion | Emotional creativity | 0.302 | 5.892 | < .001 |
| Condition 4 (with mediator) | Dogmatic thinking | Self-compassion | Emotional creativity | −0.365 | −7.046 | < .001 |

As shown in Table 5, the significance level of the relationship between dogmatic thinking and emotional creativity in the absence of the mediating variable was < .001, which is lower than .05. In addition, the path coefficient was −0.429 and the T-value was −8.005. Because the T-value falls outside the range of −1.96 to +1.96, it can be concluded that dogmatic thinking has a significant effect on emotional creativity; therefore, the first condition of the Baron and Kenny mediation test was confirmed.

The significance level, path coefficient, and T-value for the relationship between dogmatic thinking and self-compassion were < .001, −0.214, and −3.802, respectively. Given that the significance level was lower than .05 and the T-value was outside the range of −1.96 to +1.96, it can be concluded that dogmatic thinking has a significant effect on self-compassion; thus, the second condition was confirmed.

The significance level, path coefficient, and T-value for the relationship between self-compassion and emotional creativity were < .001, 0.302, and 5.892, respectively. Because the significance level was lower than .05 and the T-value exceeded the critical range of −1.96 to +1.96, it can be concluded that self-compassion has a significant effect on emotional creativity; therefore, the third condition was confirmed.

The significance level of the relationship between dogmatic thinking and emotional creativity in the presence



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of the mediating variable (self-compassion) was < .001, which is lower than .05. Moreover, the path coefficient was −0.365 and the T-value was −7.046. Because the T-value lies outside the range of −1.96 to +1.96, dogmatic thinking continues to have a significant effect on emotional creativity in the presence of the mediating variable. However, because the magnitude of this relationship decreased compared to the model without the mediator, self-compassion plays a partial mediating role. Accordingly, the mediating role of self-compassion was confirmed, and it can be concluded that dogmatic thinking affects emotional creativity through the partial mediating role of self-compassion among students of the Islamic Azad University, Neka Branch (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

## 4. Discussion

The present study aimed to examine the effect of dogmatic thinking on emotional creativity with the mediating role of self-compassion among university students. The findings of the structural equation modeling indicated that dogmatic thinking had a significant negative effect on emotional creativity, dogmatic thinking had a significant negative effect on self-compassion, and self-compassion had a significant positive effect on emotional creativity. Moreover, self-compassion was found to partially mediate the relationship between dogmatic thinking and emotional creativity. Taken together, these results provide empirical support for the proposed cognitive–emotional model and contribute to a more integrated understanding of how rigid cognitive styles influence emotional creative functioning through self-related emotional processes.

The negative effect of dogmatic thinking on emotional creativity observed in this study is consistent with prior theoretical and empirical research emphasizing the constraining role of rigid, absolutist cognitive styles on creative and emotional processes. Emotional creativity requires openness to emotional ambiguity, tolerance of contradictory feelings, and flexibility in emotional interpretation (Averill & Thomas-Knowles, 1991; Runco & Pritzker, 2020). Dogmatic thinking, characterized by fixed beliefs, black-and-white judgments, and resistance to alternative viewpoints, directly undermines these requirements. The present findings align with the results reported by Johnson and Mitchell (Johnson & Mitchell, 2023), who demonstrated that absolutist thinking limits emotional novelty and originality by narrowing emotional appraisal processes. Similarly, Anderson and Miller (Anderson & Miller, 2024) showed that rigid cognitive schemas reduce individuals' capacity to reinterpret emotional experiences, thereby suppressing emotional creativity. Educational studies have also indicated that inflexible thinking patterns interfere with creative engagement and adaptive emotional learning, particularly in academic contexts (Mutiani et al., 2021; Pan et al., 2023).

The significant negative relationship between dogmatic thinking and self-compassion found in this study further supports the growing body of literature linking rigid cognitive styles to maladaptive self-relational processes. Self-compassion involves responding to personal difficulties with kindness, mindfulness, and recognition of shared human imperfection (Neff, 2003). Dogmatic thinkers, however, tend to adopt harsh evaluative standards and interpret personal setbacks as absolute failures, which intensifies self-judgment and emotional isolation. The present findings are consistent with those of Smith and Rodriguez (Smith & Rodriguez, 2021), who reported that absolutist thinking is inversely associated with self-compassion and psychological flexibility. Likewise, O'Donnell and Michalak (O'Donnell & Michalak, 2020) demonstrated that deterministic thinking predicts lower self-compassion and poorer mental health outcomes. From a cognitive–emotional perspective, rigid belief systems restrict mindful self-awareness and foster over-identification with negative thoughts and emotions, thereby weakening compassionate self-relating (Thompson & Evans, 2020; Zalevskii, 2021).

In addition, the results showed that self-compassion had a significant positive effect on emotional creativity. This finding highlights self-compassion as a key emotional resource that facilitates creative emotional functioning. Self-compassion creates a psychologically safe internal environment in which individuals feel permitted to explore, express, and transform emotional experiences without fear of self-criticism (Neff & Tóth, 2022). Prior research supports this association, indicating that self-compassion enhances emotional openness, emotional regulation, and authenticity—core components of emotional creativity (Matos et al., 2021; Robinson & Taylor, 2023). Di Fabio and Saklofske (Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2021) also found that compassion-related traits are positively associated with emotional intelligence, which overlaps conceptually with emotional creativity. Among university students, self-compassion has been linked to higher levels of flourishing, meaning in life, and positive emotional engagement, all of



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which are conducive to creative emotional expression (Chan et al., 2022; Li & Wu, 2025).

The mediating role of self-compassion identified in this study represents one of its most important contributions. The findings showed that although dogmatic thinking continued to exert a direct negative effect on emotional creativity, the magnitude of this effect was reduced when self-compassion was included in the model, indicating partial mediation. This result suggests that self-compassion functions as a psychological mechanism through which rigid cognitive styles influence emotional creativity. In line with this interpretation, Pyszkowska and Rönnlund (Pyszkowska & Rönnlund, 2021) demonstrated that self-compassion mediates the relationship between deterministic thinking and well-being, highlighting its buffering role against cognitive rigidity. Similarly, Neff and Tóth (Neff & Tóth, 2022) found that self-compassion mediates the effects of emotional creativity on mental health outcomes, suggesting that compassionate self-relating enhances the adaptive benefits of emotional creativity.

The partial rather than full mediation observed in this study indicates that dogmatic thinking affects emotional creativity both directly and indirectly. This finding is theoretically meaningful, as it implies that rigid cognitive patterns may limit emotional creativity not only by reducing self-compassion but also by directly constraining emotional appraisal and expression processes. Johnson and Mitchell (Johnson & Mitchell, 2023) argued that absolutist thinking restricts emotional creativity by narrowing emotional meaning-making, independent of self-related attitudes. At the same time, the mediating role of self-compassion underscores the importance of emotional self-regulation and self-attitude as pathways through which cognitive styles shape emotional outcomes (Kotera et al., 2023; Tran et al., 2022). Thus, interventions aimed at enhancing emotional creativity may benefit from simultaneously addressing cognitive rigidity and fostering self-compassion.

The present findings are also consistent with broader educational and social psychology research emphasizing the role of emotional and cognitive flexibility in student development. Studies conducted in academic and professional training contexts suggest that creativity, emotional intelligence, and compassionate self-relating are critical for motivation, resilience, and adaptive performance (Hurabarat et al., 2023; Ukolova et al., 2020). In contemporary higher education environments characterized by uncertainty and rapid change, rigid thinking styles may hinder students' ability to cope with emotional challenges and engage creatively with learning tasks (Onishchuk et al., 2020; Sahu, 2020). Conversely, self-compassion has been shown to support intrinsic motivation, emotional balance, and creative engagement, particularly under conditions of stress (Casaló et al., 2021; Kotera et al., 2023).

## 5. Conclusion

By demonstrating that self-compassion partially mediates the relationship between dogmatic thinking and emotional creativity, the findings extend existing models of emotional creativity beyond purely cognitive explanations and highlight the central role of self-attitude. This integrative approach is consistent with recent calls in creativity research to consider affective and motivational processes alongside cognitive mechanisms (Anic & Dahlenburg, 2025; Runco & Pritzker, 2020). Moreover, the results support the view that reducing rigid thinking patterns and cultivating compassionate self-awareness are complementary pathways for enhancing emotional creativity and psychological well-being among students (Boeiry et al., 2024; López & Schroevers, 2018).

Despite its contributions, the present study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the use of a cross-sectional design limits the ability to draw causal inferences about the relationships among dogmatic thinking, self-compassion, and emotional creativity. Second, data were collected using self-report questionnaires, which may be subject to social desirability bias and common method variance. Third, the sample was drawn from a single university, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other educational or cultural contexts.

Future studies could address these limitations by employing longitudinal or experimental designs to more rigorously examine causal relationships among the study variables. Replicating the model in different universities, cultural settings, or age groups would also enhance the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, future research may consider including other mediating or moderating variables, such as psychological flexibility, mindfulness, or emotion regulation strategies, to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms underlying emotional creativity.

Based on the findings, educational and psychological practitioners may consider designing interventions that simultaneously reduce rigid thinking patterns and promote self-compassion among university students. Incorporating self-compassion training, reflective practices, and flexible



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thinking exercises into counseling programs and academic curricula may help enhance students' emotional creativity, emotional well-being, and adaptive functioning in academic and personal domains.

## Authors' Contributions

F.N.T. conceptualized the study, developed the theoretical framework, and defined the research hypotheses related to dogmatic thinking, self-compassion, and emotional creativity. F.S.S. designed the methodology, managed sampling procedures and data collection, and conducted the statistical analyses using structural equation modeling. Both authors jointly interpreted the results, contributed to drafting and revising all sections of the manuscript, approved the final version for publication, and take shared responsibility for the scientific integrity and accuracy of the study.

## Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

## Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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## Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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## Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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