School Children's Perspective on Rejection Sensitivity, Forgiveness, and Anger Expression

Anam Amama [iD][1] **and Mahwesh Arooj Naz** [iD][2]

ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the differences related to rejection sensitivity, forgiveness tendency, and anger expression among school children using a sample of 800 adolescents (girls = 50%, boys = 50%), aged 12 to 17 years (M =14, SD =1.123), selected through stratified random sampling. Urdu version of the child rejection sensitivity questionnaire (C-RSQ), the Heartland forgiveness scale (HFS), and the indigenously developed child anger expression scale (CAES) were used for assessment. Results indicated that the interaction of gender and different school systems have a significant impact on RS, tendency to forgive, and anger expressions of school-going adolescents. Furthermore, boys from the private school system have more anger rejection sensitivity (44.847, p< 0.01), expression of anger through externalizing (385.511, p< 0.01), hostility, and violence (62.935, p< 0.01). Whereas, girls from the private school system were found to have more anxious rejection sensitivity (137.180, p< 0.01), higher tendency to forgive (25.242, p< 0.01); and increased internalized anger expression (885.982, p< 0.01). It is concluded that rejection sensitivity and low forgiveness lead to different anger expressions among school children, whereas school ecology and teachers play a crucial role in the character building of adolescents by teaching them moral values and civic sense.

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1 Introduction

School-going adolescents are at the age where they have higher emotional reactivity and increased involvement with social agents. In this phase, a sense of belongingness after parents start to develop with peers and teachers; and they become personality-building agents in adolescent's life. School is the place where they get an opportunity to interact and spend ample time with them (Shujja, Malik, & Khan, 2017). Bronfenbrenner (1977) ecological model of children's development suggests that school and classroom ecologies also have an impact on children's mental development and social behaviors just like family ecology. Congruently, social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) illustrates that children learn beliefs and behaviors by

[1] Psychologist, Aitchison College, Lahore, Pakistan.
✉ anam.amama196@gmail.com (Corresponding Author)
[2] Clinical Psychology Unit, Government College University Lahore, Pakistan.
✉ mahwesharooj@gmail.com

observation, imitation, and modeling of their surrounding environment. Relative to Psycho-Social Theory (1950), behavior patterns change through the interaction of multiple interrelated complex factors present in the environment, social relationships, and self-understanding (Lahey, Moffitt, & Caspi, 2003). This research will urge to find out prevailing levels of rejection sensitivity; forgiveness and anger expressions by categorizing the sample into ecological factors namely school system and gender.

The crux of educational institutes' moral enterprise is to implant not only literacy or communication technology but also to instill the characteristics of sound well-being and emotional quotient of the student by inculcating the virtues to guide their behaviors (Gilleylen et al., 2008). Furthermore, researchers have indicated that students whose faculty members and peer groups are not supportive in the school, consequently develop emotional (e.g., anxiety, nervousness, feelings of rejection, unhappiness), and behavioral problems (e.g., physical aggressiveness, violence, hostility, internalizing anger, hyperactivity, disruptiveness) (Battistich, Solomon, Kim, Watson, & Schaps, 1995; Perry & Weinstein, 1998). Like other Asian countries, there are mainly two school systems present in Pakistan which are public and private. Both mainstream school systems differ from each other based on school climate, maintenance, facilities, and economic background of children, faculty, teaching methods, and quality of education (Ahmed, Shaukat, & Abiodullah, 2009). These differences create a huge impact on a child's developing personality. Literature postulates that the school environment negatively or positively affects the mood, motivation, creativity, and productivity of the students. In the schooling period, children's direction towards exploration in life is identified (Sharma, 2011).

A worldwide concept held in both Eastern and Western cultures is that there is a gender difference in psycho-social development and its expression which begins to form in childhood. Prospects like boys have to be strong, calmer, cannot cry, and can express anger if necessary whereas girls are expected to express sadness or cheeriness; they can easily reveal their sensitive or vulnerable sides.

Social developmental theories identify gender differences in the expression of emotions and behaviors. Accordingly, gender roles are learned by children through cognitive learning, experience, and socialization (Liben & Bigler, 2002). Congruently, Gender Schema Theory also focuses on the role of children actively observing the environment in the development of gender-based behavior and cognitive schemas. These schemas are made up of information related to behaviors and traits linked with being a boy or girl. Later, boys or girls develop their gender (boy or girl) schema and continue to choose those activities and environments that fit their sex schemas (Martin & Halverson Jr, 1981). Similarly, social learning theorists also posit that social agents (parents, significant ones, teachers) encourage children to adopt gender role-consistent behaviors. They instilled these by modeling, explicitly teaching, or reinforcing certain gender-specific behaviors. Social learning theorists also propose that once these gender-specific roles are internalized by young ones, then these behaviors will be expressed or not depending on the particular situation. The youth express it as it is within the context where it may be adaptive. For example, a girl learned to express cheeriness as part of her feminine emotion expression, even if she is not feeling like it. And then she demonstrates this in front of unfamiliar adults who may be expecting her to depict feminine behavior (Bandura, 1969).

The commencement of adolescence marks the developmental period where identity confusion is at its peak (Erikson, 1968), with reduced levels of self-esteem (Robins & Trzesniewski, 2005). Adolescents who are rejected by their teachers, parents, and peers become unable to cope with difficulties in handling social interaction as they are not only likely to develop a cohesive self-concept but also to develop and maintain mature social relationships (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). Moreover, research findings in this area have repeatedly indicated that poor quality of relationships is linked to negative mental health outcomes such as depression or low self-esteem in early adolescence (Rubin, Bukowski, & Bowker, 2015).

Consequently, these children show higher sensitivity to rejection (Harb, Heimberg, Fresco, Schneier, & Liebowitz, 2002). This type of sensitivity is a social cognitive processing disposition of defensively expecting (e.g., angry, or anxious), readily perceiving, and overreacting to the prior expectation of rejection in social situations (Downey & Feldman, 1996; Downey, Freitas, Michaelis, & Khouri, 1998).

The model of rejection sensitivity (Feldman & Downey, 1994) highlighted that primitive experiences of rejection create a negative effect on the person's encoding, expecting, and valuing of new social situations; and how he or she responds to the situation. Individuals, with a past of rejection, become anxious or angry when they start expecting rejection. Some individuals anticipating rejection based on their past experiences become nervous, worried, fearful, or tense in threatening situations and some become furious, violent, or steamed up in rage and anger. They also show patterns of responding to rejection, either by running away from situations in which rejection is possible or intensively seeking assurance that they will not be rejected again. If they perceive rejection they will overreact in heightened negativity, anger, hostility, or withdrawal (Downey, Lebolt, Rincon, & Freitas, 1998; Horney, 2013). They have a higher rate of perceived rejection from people in ambiguous situations than others. They automatically scan rejection into other's behaviors and verbal content (Levy, Ayduk, & Downey, 2001). This social rejection sensitivity pattern of children negatively influences their adulthood which includes interpersonal difficulties in intimate relationships, and social and professional life (Roberts, Caspi, & Moffitt, 2001; Schulenberg, Bryant, & O'Malley, 2004). A recent study by Zhou, Li, Tian, and Huebner (2020) suggested that rejection sensitivity explains a relationship between depression and low self-esteem. It is also mentioned by the group that individuals with negative self-image are more vulnerable to being sensitive towards rejection and criticism from others while augmenting the levels of rejection sensitivity.

Individuals experiencing rejection sensitivity find it hard to forgive (Sakız & Sarıçam, 2015). Forgiving is a continually evolving process that starts to develop when the child begins to differentiate between good and bad by knowing the value of both poles. The primary socializing agents who teach the child the concept of forgiveness are parents and teachers who teach them to embrace moral response to a moral wrong (MacLachlan, 2008). Forgiveness is a highly practiced moral value in adolescents and when they become envisioned of forgiving, they take greater care of morals in their later life (Exline, Kaplan, & Grubbs, 2012). Forgiveness breaks the cycle of violence by converting revenge into compassion and anger into kindness (Burnette, Taylor, Worthington, & Forsyth, 2007; Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro, & Hannon, 2002; Klatt & Enright, 2009; Lickerman, 2010; Worthington Jr, 2005). Forgiveness is a positive response to uphold and repair meaningful interpersonal relationships. But those children, who consistently experience unfairness, bullying, rejection, or hurt by someone, do not consider forgiveness as the only option. This lack of forgiveness tendency triggers revenge, anger, hostility, and rage in them. These become a huge part of their personality which later impacts their relations in adulthood. These children also lack social and emotional stability (Armour & Umbreit, 2005).

Anger expressions are stimulated by positive or negative social interactions (Davis, 2014; Lavin & Park, 1999; Paul, 1995; Tavris, 1989). There are two basic sources from where anger is triggered. Irrational perceptions of reality and low frustration tolerance, emotional reasoning, unreasonable expectations, and people ratings are the internal sources of anger. Whereas the external sources of anger are personal attacks, abuse or let down of ideas or opinions by people; when basic needs (work, life, or family) are threatened, and un-tolerated environmental factors (Loo, 2005).

There is a way each child habitually expresses anger in rejecting or threatening situations. The foremost expression is externalized anger which means openly expressing physical and verbal anger that leads children to shouting, hitting, annoyance, or bad-tempered behavior toward others. Easy targets for these children are peers and siblings (Saima Majeed

& Malik, 2015) The second one is hostility and violence which is the behavioral expression of anger. These children snag with peers, parents, siblings, and significant ones; have torn self-esteem, and suffer from depression. They have stress either due to bullying or poor health which damages them internally and even this hostility leads children to commit suicide (Hawton & James, 2005). The anger of children is steamed up by cognitive expression which is further solidified by negativity and rejection. These feelings of rejection show that angry children have feelings of low self-esteem, helplessness, worthlessness, and rejection by significant ones. Children with low self-worth and self-esteem get offended easily by others and turn out to be angry. They fixedly search for cues of rejection, disapproval, and criticism by others which most of the time, is not true (Sorensen, 1998).

Literature postulates that primary caregivers with harsh parenting patterns, hostility, and rejecting behaviors give rise to the defensive expectation of rejection in their offspring which later develop interpersonal difficulties and weak self-regulation (Ayduk et al., 2000; Levy et al., 2001). A study on race-based rejection sensitivity among white and historically black university students found that negative affect and lower forgiveness turned out to be the predictors of rejection sensitivity based on racism (Henson, Derlega, Pearson, Ferrer, & Holmes, 2013; Sakız & Sarıçam, 2015; Zareen & Dasti, 2016).

Empirical literature showed that anger expressions in adults were rooted in their childhood and adolescence. Later in life these grownups who are inappropriately surviving the anger with the vulnerability of developing mental and physical problems also suffer from disturbed interpersonal relationships (Kerr & Schneider, 2008). Literature has assured that angry adolescents sense more rejection due to academic difficulties which later increase angry behaviors in children. They have more feelings of inadequacy, learning difficulties, dropping out of school earlier, and conduct problems (Risi, Gerhardstein, & Kistner, 2003; Stiffler, 2008).

After finding ample amounts of congruent importance on primary school experiences and emotional development, this calls the researcher to dig out the identification of rejection sensitivity patterns, forgiveness, and anger expression that prevail in school-going adolescents of Pakistan. Schools play an important role in socializing young children's gender attitudes and behaviors. Teachers and peers influence children's gender attitudes, which in turn influence gender differences in cognition and behavior. Unfortunately, teachers and administration fail to identify and combat gender stereotypes and prejudices. So this maltreatment and neglect in school ecology often leads children to develop emotional and behavioral issues. This neglect also overlooks the fact that high standards and non-reachable societal expectations of parents, schools, teachers, and peers lead adolescents in a quest of either being accepted or rejected by society and significant ones which directly and indirectly sharpen the morals and behaviors of children. Thus, the current study, in the light of theoretical apprehension of socialization and observational learning in the formation of gender roles, aims to find out what differences school systems and gender brings to the psycho-social development of school-going adolescents. Particularly, it examines the school system and gender differences across rejection sensitivity, forgiveness, and anger expression among school-going adolescents. Moreover, it will reflect on understanding whether anger expression can be predicted based on rejection sensitivity, forgiveness, gender, and the school system.

2   Method
2.1   Research Design
It is a comparative cross-sectional research design that measures the interaction effect and differences between government and private school children related to rejection sensitivity, forgiveness, and anger expression.

2.2   Sample
The sample consisted of (N=800) school-going students including (n=400) boys and (n=400) girls. The age range of the sample was 12-17 (M=14, SD=1.123). The participants

were from government and private schools of Lahore to get a representative sample of students (enrolled in classes 8 to 10). Stratified random sampling was used to collect data from Lahore. To represent the population of Lahore, area probability was used. Three towns were selected namely Data Gunj Baksh Town, Samnabad Town, and Cantt to represent the geographical location of Lahore. The data collection was done through private and government schools located in these towns. Two strata based on the sector of the study i.e., public and private, and gender i.e. male and female were made to draw the sample.

2.2.1 *Inclusion criteria*
Participants were students from classes 8th 9th and 10th. They were included because the ages in the mentioned classes can recognize and relate to their own psycho-social experiences and current research objectives. Both genders were included. The government and private schools were included to draw a sample to illustrate a comprehensive picture of the study.

2.2.2 *Exclusion criteria*
Students were not selected according to their age. The grades below 7 were not included in the sample.

2.3   Measures
2.3.1 *Children Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire* **(CRSQ)**
The children's rejection sensitivity questionnaire was developed by Downey, Freitas, et al. (1998). It measures anxious and angry rejection sensitivity in children. Urdu translation of this scale has been used which is done by Ayesha and Iftekhar (2016). The scale is based on 12 hypothetical interpersonal situations. 6 situations involve peers and the other 6 involve teachers, with the potential for positive or negative outcomes. The measure first asks the participant to indicate their degree of anxiety about the outcome on a 6-point scale, then indicates their degree of anger on a 6-point scale, and finally indicates their outcome expectations on a 6- 6-point scale. A score for angry rejection sensitivity for each situation is generated by multiplying the expected likelihood of rejection by the degree of anger over its occurrence. A score for anxious rejection sensitivity for each situation is similarity generated by multiplying the expected likelihood of rejection by the degree of nervousness over its occurrence. The final scores of angry and anxious rejection sensitivity are determined by average scores for each of the 12 situations. Here in the current study, we are using two subscales independently to measure the levels of angry and anxious rejection sensitivity in school children. The Cronbach alpha of C-RSQ is 0.83.

2.3.2 *Heartland Forgiveness Scale* **(HFS)**
Thompson, Snyder, Hoffman, Michael, Rasmussen, and Billings developed this scale in 2005. It has 18 self-report items that measure a person's general tendency to be forgiving. Seven (7) point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "almost always false of me" to 7 = "almost always true of me" is used to rate the scale. This scale has Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .87 which is considered to be good internal reliability. Urdu translation of this scale in the present study is done by Butt, Malik, and Sanam (2012).

2.3.3 *Child Anger Expression Scale* **(CAES)**
The child anger expression scale is an indigenous scale developed by S Majeed and Malik (2016). It assesses expressions of anger that prevail in children which are external anger expression; feelings of rejection; hostility and violence; and internal anger expression. The 4-point Likert scale was used for rating responses which range from 0= not at all, 1=occasionally, 2 sometimes, 3= More often, and 4= Always. Its reliability according to Cronbach alpha was found to be excellent with a range of 0.70 to 0.80.

3   Procedure
Ethical considerations were kept under consideration during the study. Formal permissions to use the measuring tools were sought from the authors of the scales as well as

from authors of Urdu translation through emails. Afterward, the protocol was arranged by including informed consent, a demographic form, and three scales. It was clarified in the consent form that information gathered from the participants would be used only for research purposes. Then for the data collection, higher authorities of schools were approached for permission. The process of data collection was a difficult journey. As the questionnaire was a bit lengthy, it took the longest time for the students to complete it. The data collected had many incomplete questionnaires and some were not completed properly, so those protocols were discarded. Some students refused to give consent to participate in the research due to their study schedule and lack of interest. The researcher respected the consent rights of students and moved to other schools and sections to reach the targeted sample size. Clear instructions were given to the students and ambiguities were clarified. It was made sure that all the questions were answered. Confidentiality of data (participant's responses) was maintained throughout the study. Research questionnaires were completed by the participants themselves. Difficult words were pronounced for their ease by the researcher. Afterward, participants and teachers were thanked and debriefed about the nature of the study.

4 Results
4.1 Descriptive Analysis

Table 1

Frequencies, Percentages, Mean and Standard Deviation of Demographic Variables (N=800)

Demographics	N	%
Gender		
Boy	400	50
Girl	400	50
Classes		
Eighth	305	38.1
Ninth	223	27
Matric	272	34
School system		
Government School	400	50
Private school system	400	50
Religion		
Muslim	721	90.1
Non-Muslim	79	9.9
Family system		
Nuclear	444	55.5
Joint	356	44.5
Birth order		
Firstborn	268	33.5
Last born	199	24.9
Only child	54	6.8
Middle born	279	34.9
Step parents		
N.A	741	92.6
Father	30	3.8
Mother	28	3.5
Both	1	.1
Step siblings		
N.A	735	91.9
Brother/s	24	3
Sister /s	18	2.3
Both	23	2.9

Note: N= 800. Participants were on average 14years old (SD=1.123)

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of demographic variables. It describes that the average number of participants belongs to middle adolescents. Among the sample population, most of the participants were in 8th grade, a small number of participants were from grade 10th /O '2 and very few were in grade 9th or O'1. Equal proportion was present between gender and both school systems. Muslim participants were larger in proportion than non-Muslims. Present samples have a higher proportion of participants who have a nuclear family system than participants living in a joint family system. The sample has a large proportion of middle-born participants, the smallest proportion of first born, smaller proportion of last born whereas few were only children of their families. A large number of participants did not have step-parents or living with them followed by several participants who reported having step-father. Whereas a small portion of participants had mothers and the least number of participants had step-parents. A large number of participants did not have step-siblings neither step brother nor step sister. A small proportion of participants reported having step-brothers or brothers followed by participants who had step-siblings as well as sisters and the least amount of participants had step-sisters or sisters.

4.2   Two-way MANOVA

Due to multiple dependent variables (Angry Rejection Sensitivity, Anxious Rejection Sensitivity, Tendency to Forgive, Externalized Anger, Feelings of Rejection, Hostility, and Violence), and two-factor variables (gender and school system), Two-Way Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) is used see the interaction differences by dividing the population into groups.

The results of two-way MONVA showed that the effects of gender [$F_{(7,790)}$ =211.135, $p< 0.01$; Wilks' Λ =. 348, partinal η^2 = .652, observed power = 1.00] and school system [$F_{(7,790)}$ =15.430, $p< 0.01$; Wilks' Λ =. 880, partinal η^2 = .120, observed power = 1.00] were statistically significant. Moreover, the interaction of gender and school system [$F_{(7,790)}$ =42.477, $p< 0.01$; Wilks' Λ =. 727, partinal η^2 = .273, observed power = 1.00] also turned out to be significant. The effect size is smaller.

Univariate repeated measures of ANOVA revealed boys have angrier rejection sensitivity [$F_{(1,796)}$ = 44.847, $p< 0.01$], higher feelings of rejection [$F_{(1,796)}$ =2.60, $p=107$], expression of anger through externalizing [$F_{(1,796)}$ =385.511, $p< 0.01$], hostility and violence [$F_{(1,796)}$ =62.935, $p< 0.01$]. Girls were found to have more anxious rejection sensitivity [$F_{(1,796)}$ =137.180, $p< 0.01$], higher tendency to forgive [$F_{(1,796)}$ =25.242, $p< 0.01$; and increased internalized anger expression [$F_{(1,796)}$ =885.982, $p< 0.01$]; in comparison to boys.

Therefore, in the private school system, students were found to have higher angry rejection sensitivity [$F_{(1,796)}$ =9.209, $p= 0.02$], the tendency to forgive [$F_{(1,796)}$ =4.758, $p=.029$], and externalized anger expression [$F_{(1,796)}$ =48.702, $p= 0.00$] in comparison to government schools. Moreover, internalized anger of expression [$F_{(1,796)}$ =38.304, $p= 0.00$] and feelings of rejection [$F_{(1,796)}$ =1.344, $p=.247$] were higher in children studying in the government school system.

Table 2
Means, (95% confidence intervals) and p-values for Gender Differences (LSD test) of Angrily Expectation of Rejection, Anxious rejection sensitivity, Tendency to Forgive, Externalized Anger, Internalized Anger, Hostility and Violence, Feeling of Rejection in School Going Children (N=800)

Variables	Males	Females	*p*-value	*Partial Eta Squared*
Angry Rejection Sensitivity	157.155(2.282)	135.540(2.282)	.000	*.053*
Anxious Rejection Sensitivity	145.240 (2.705)	190.050(2.705)	.000	*.147*
Tendency To Forgive	74.363 (.468)	77.685(.468)	.000	*.031*
Externalized Anger	49.510 (.875)	25.223(.875)	.000	*.326*
Feelings Of Rejection	12.610 (.474)	11.528(.474)	.107	*.003*
Hostility And Violence	13.615 (.422)	8.877(.422)	.000	*.073*
Internalized Anger	7.235 (.267)	18.465(.267)	.000	*.527*

*Note. *p* < .05. **p* < .01. ***p* < .001. N=800*

Table 3
Means, (95% confidence intervals) and p-values for School System Differences (LSD test) of angry expectation of Rejection, Anxious rejection sensitivity, Tendency to Forgive, Externalized Anger, Internalized Anger, Hostility and Violence, Feeling of Rejection in School Children (N=800)

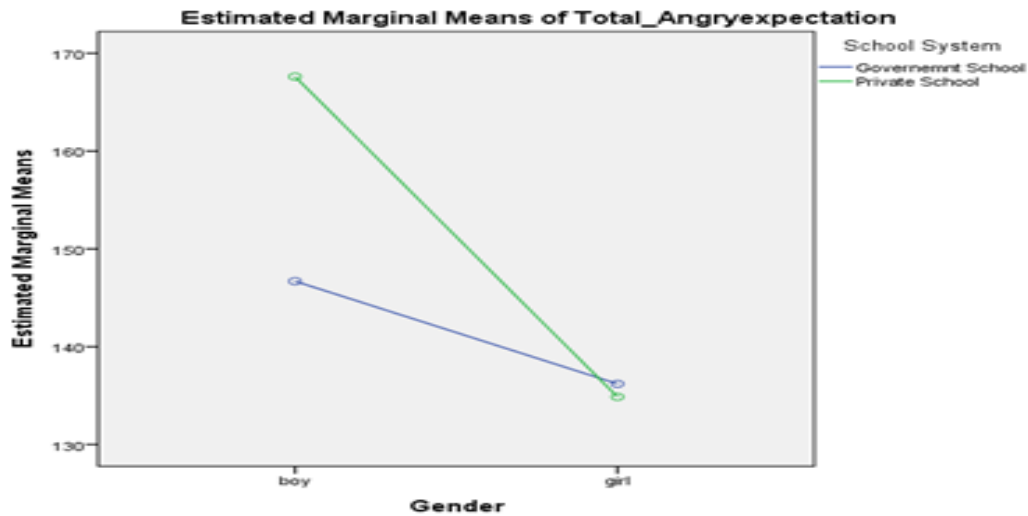| Variables	Government School System	Private School System	p-value	Partial Eta Squared
Angry Rejection Sensitivity	141.450 (2.282)	151.245(2.282)	.002	9.209
Anxious Rejection Sensitivity	167.855 (2.705)	167.435(2.705)	.913	.012
Tendency To Forgive	75.303(.468)	76.745(.468)	.029	4.758
Externalized Anger	33.050 (.875)	41.683(.875)	.000	48.702
Feelings Of Rejection	12.458(.474)	11.680(.474)	.247	1.344
Hostility And Violence	11.032(.422)	11.460(.422)	.474	.512
Internalized Anger	14.017(.267)	11.683(.267)	.000	38.304

*Note. *p* < .05. **p* < .01. ***p* < .001. N=10*

However, there were no differences related to the school system found in anxious expectations towards rejection [F (1,796) =0.12, p=.913]; and hostility and violence [F (1,796) =.512, p= .474] (expression of anger). Tables 2 and 3 show the means (95% confidence intervals) and p-values (Cohen's d effect size statistic) for all dependent variables grouped by gender and school system respectively.

4.3   Figures

Line Graph illustrating school system and gender differences related to angry expectation of Rejection, Anxious rejection sensitivity, Tendency to Forgive, Externalized Anger, Internalized Anger, Hostility and Violence, and Feeling of Rejection in School Children (N=800).
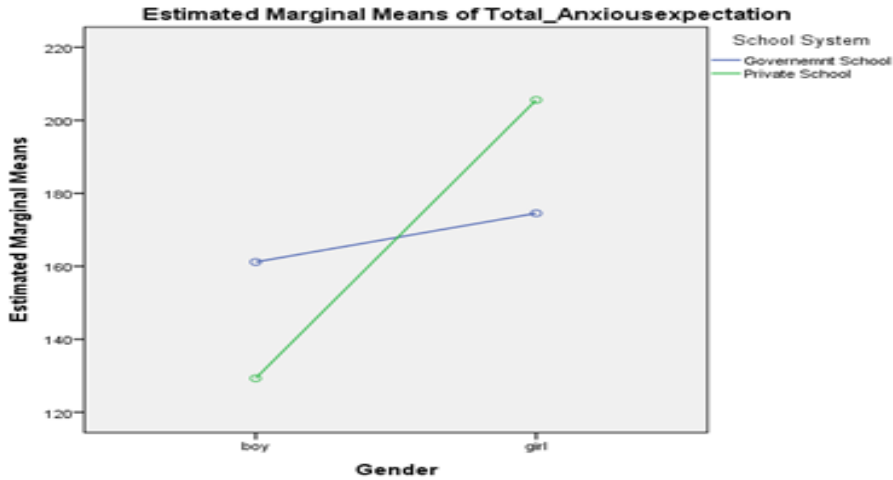
Figure 1

Gender and School Difference Related to Angry Expectation of Rejection.

Note: This figure demonstrates the gender and school system differences in the angry expectation of rejection in school children. Results show that boys from both private and government school systems have higher levels of angry expectation of rejection in comparison to girls from both private and government school systems.
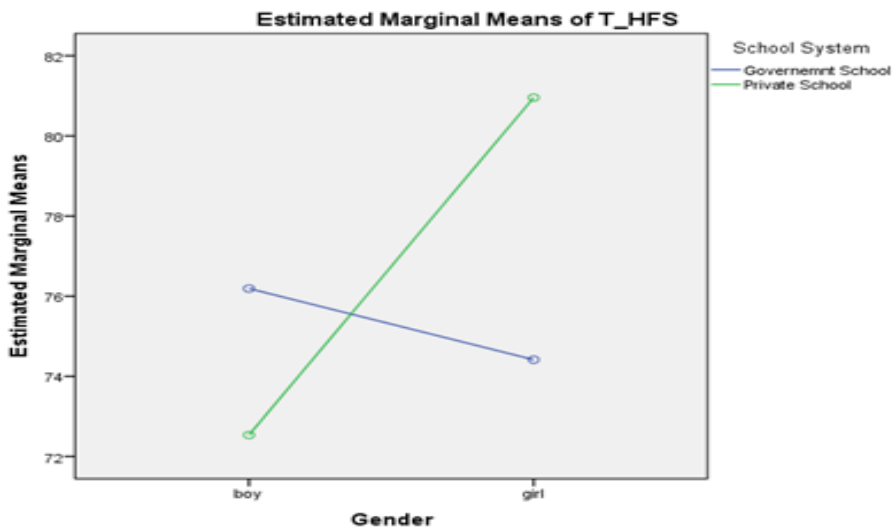
Figure 2

Gender and School Difference Related to Anxious Expectation of Rejection.

Estimated Marginal Means of Total_Anxiousexpectation

Note: This figure demonstrates the gender and school system differences in the anxious expectation of rejection of school children. Results show that girls from government and private school systems have higher levels of anxious expectation of rejection in comparison to boys from government schools and boys from private school systems.

Figure 3

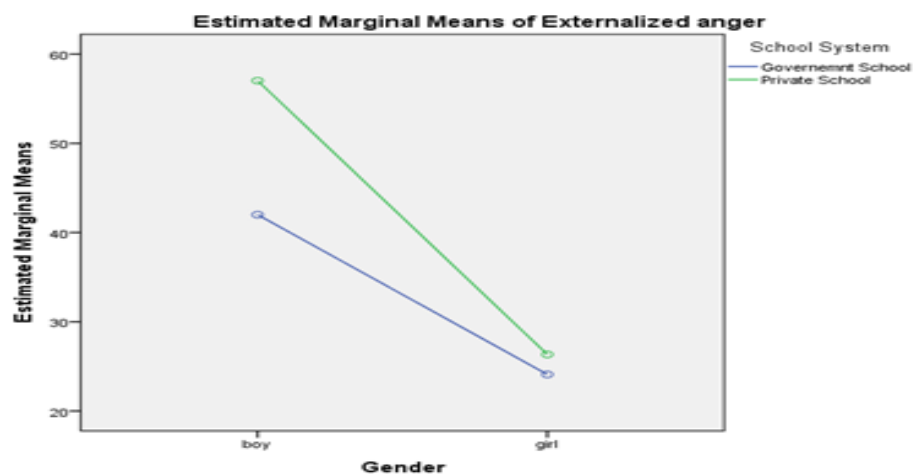*Gender and School Differences Related to Tendency of Forgiveness*

Estimated Marginal Means of T_HFS

Note: This figure demonstrates the gender and school system differences in the tendency of forgiveness of school children. Results show that girls from the private school system have higher levels of forgiveness in comparison to boys from the private school system. On the other hand, boys from the government school system have higher levels of forgiveness in comparison to girls from the government school system.

Figure 4

Gender and School Differences Related to Feelings of Rejection

Estimated Marginal Means of Feelings of rejection

Note: This figure demonstrates the gender and school system differences in the tendency to feel rejected by school children. Results show that girls from the private school system have lower levels of feeling of rejection in comparison to boys from the private school system. On the other hand, girls from the government school system have higher levels of feeling of rejection in comparison to boys from the government school system.
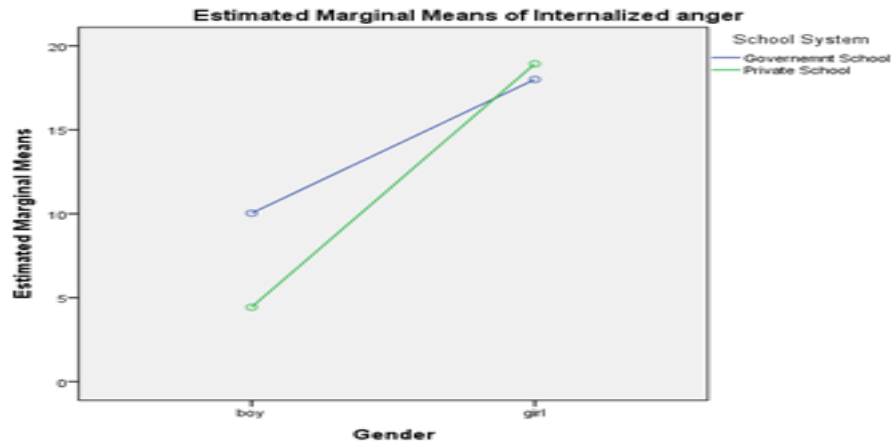
Figure 5

Gender and School Difference Related to Externalized Anger Expression.

Estimated Marginal Means of Externalized anger

Note: This figure demonstrates the gender and school system differences in the externalized anger expression of school children. Results show that boys from the private school system have higher levels of externalized
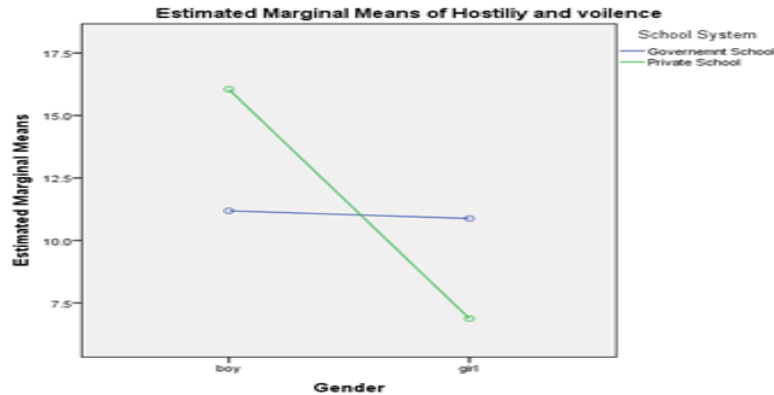
anger in comparison to girls from the private school system. This figure also shows that boys have higher levels of externalized anger compared to girls both in private and government school systems.

Figure 6
Gender and School Difference Related to Internalized Anger Expression.

Note: This figure demonstrates the gender and school system differences related to the internalized anger expression in school children. Results show that girls from the private school system have higher levels of internalized anger in comparison to boys from the private school system. This figure also shows that girls have higher levels of internalized anger compared to boys both in private and government school systems.

Figure 7
Gender and School Differences Related to Hostility and Violence Anger Expression

Note: This figure demonstrates the gender and school system differences related to hostility and violence (anger expression) in school children. Results show that boys from private school systems have higher levels of hostility and violence in comparison to girls from private school systems. The figure also shows that there is not a considerable difference in hostility and violence between boys and girls in the government school system.

4.4   Multiple Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was run to predict the anger expressions namely externalized anger expression, the feeling of rejection, hostility, and violence, and internalized anger expression from gender, two school systems (private and government school), anxious rejection sensitivity, angry rejection sensitivity, and tendency to forgive.

Table 4

Results of multiple linear regression for predicting anger expression

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable							
(Predictors)	Externalized Anger		Feelings Of Rejection		Hostility And Violence		Internalized Anger	
	β	*p*	β	*p*	β	*p*	B	*p*
Gender	-.436	.000	.013	.76	-.128	0.001	.610	.000
School System	.183	.000	-.047	.19	.017	.617	-.134	.000
Angry Rejection Sensitivity	.208	.000	.122	.003	.193	.000	-.128	.000
Anxious Rejection Sensitivity	-.139	.000	-.071	.095	-.163	.000	.161	.000
Tendency To Forgive	-.112	.000	-.093	.010	-.184	.000	.024	.332

*Note. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$

This set of independent variables statistically significantly predicts externalization anger [F (5,794) =104.470, p=.000] with an R^2 of 0.393, the feeling of rejection [F (5,794) =4.380, p=.001] with an R^2 of .027. Moreover, these independent variables significantly also showed prediction in hostility and violence [F (5,794) =4.380, p=.001] with an R^2 of .027 and internalized anger [F (5,794) =184.63, p=.000] with an R^2 of .53.

Results hold gender and different school systems are significant predictors of anger expressions. Children with highly angry rejection sensitivity have higher chances of expressing anger through externalization, feelings of rejection, hostility, and violence. Children who are highly anxious towards rejection are more likely to internalize their anger. Results also reveal that school children who have low forgiveness tendencies are more likely to express anger externally, feelings of rejection, hostility, and violence whereas children who show higher tendencies of forgiveness are more likely to internalize their anger.

4.5   Discussion

The objective of the study is to identify the interactive differences in school-going children related to rejection sensitivity (angry and anxious rejection sensitivity), forgiveness tendency, and anger expression. With a diverse and empirical literature on gender differences and how different school ecology impacts the psycho-social development of school children, the current study postulates to find the impact of gender and school system differences related to rejection sensitivity, forgiveness tendency, and anger expression prevailing in children (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

Multivariate analysis of variance was used to determine significant differences between the groups including gender (boy and girl) and school system (government and private). The results illustrated that there are significant interaction effects of gender and school systems on rejection sensitivity, forgiveness tendency, and anger expression. Independently significant impacts of gender and school system were also recorded while analysis related to dependent variables. According to the findings of Blakemore, Berenbaum, and Liben (2013), gender differentiation in schools is primarily influenced by

teachers and peers, and directly impacts by providing different learning opportunities and feedback to children and adults. Current findings have supported many studies that claimed that many cultural gender-based stereotypes and prejudices are consciously endorsed and unconsciously held in school which influence classroom behaviors of teachers and peers (Beilock, Gunderson, Ramirez, & Levine, 2010; Riegle-Crumb & Humphries, 2012). These culture and gender-specific behaviors are instilled by teachers in schools through modeling gender stereotypic behavior, exhibiting differential expectations for males and females, and facilitating children's gender biases by marking gender as an important facet (Bigler, 2006).

Congruent to a study done on these differences indicated that private school children were found to be more approval-seeking and highly sensitive to rejection from teachers, peers, or parents in comparison to public school (Gitanjali, 2012). The results of the present study also showed a higher prevalence of rejection sensitivity, forgiveness tendency, and anger expression in the children studying in the private school system in comparison to the government school system.

Researchers assert that outcomes of social, affective, and cognitive maladaptive development are triggered by rejection (Dodge et al., 2003; Ladd, 2003; London, Downey, Bonica, & Paltin, 2007; Sandstrom, Cillessen, & Eisenhower, 2003). So, marginal means showed that private school-going boys have higher angry rejection sensitivity and girls have higher anxious rejection sensitivity as compared to government school-going children. Our results are consistent with the revised model of rejection sensitivity (Downey & Feldman, 1996) which discovered gender differences in reactions to perceived rejection. Males tend to become controlling, angry, and jealous, while females tend to feel helpless, fearful, and become hostile when anticipating rejection. Illustrations from the literature are congruent with findings where that conclude that there are no significant gender differences when it comes to rejection sensitivity, but ecology has a silent impact on becoming rejection-sensitive of a person (Besikci, Agnew, & Yildirim, 2016; Inman & London, 2022).

Compared to government school children, the forgiveness tendency is found to be higher in girls from private school systems. In congruence with the results, O. Javed (2009) also found private schools are considered better options for admission in comparison to government schools due to their greatly qualified teaching staff and better educational quality which not only focus on academic career but also put efforts to inculcate moral values in school children. Studies done on school children found better attitudes toward forgiveness and higher tendencies of forgiveness in girls studying in private schools (A. Javed, Kausar, & Khan, 2018; Toussaint & Webb, 2005).

Different environments imprint different impressions on children so children studying in different school ecologies express their anger differently. In the current study, boys from private school systems have high externalized anger, feelings of rejection, hostility, and violence whereas girls internalized their anger in comparison to government school-going children. Literature also confirms our findings that anger and physical aggression were typically higher in boys whereas girls internalize their anger (Burt, 2010; Buss & Perry, 1992; Fischer & Evers, 2011; Suman, 2016).

Different research in literature demonstrates that there is no well-defined gender difference that prevails in the expression of anger. In the light of social learning theory (1977) and research studies, anger expression is a learned behavior and it solely depends on which environment the person is living in. So, in this way, our results are congruent with this illustration that both genders can express anger but in different ways which range from externalizing, hostility, and violence to internalizing anger expression and ecology is also one fine predictor in the expression of anger (Kring, 2000).

Strong linking associations have been found in the literature revealing highly rejection sensitive individuals are more prone to express anger. Our study predicts that children with highly angry rejection sensitivity have higher chances of expressing anger through externalization, feelings of rejection, hostility, and violence. Moreover, children who are highly anxious towards rejection are more likely to internalize their anger. (De Rubeis et al., 2017; Downey, Lebolt, et al., 1998).

Forgiveness also unites with other constructs of our study to claim that the tendency to forgive can influence anger expressions among adolescents (Anderson, 2006). Current findings also predict that school children who have low forgiveness tendencies are more likely to express anger externally, feelings of rejection, hostility, and violence whereas children who show higher tendencies of forgiveness are more likely to internalize their anger (McNulty, 2011).

The study advances knowledge in the field by highlighting the fact that the social and emotional development of students is the byproduct of the school, which is affected by the social environment and ongoing interaction between social agents (peers and teachers.). Schools can work on developing learning opportunities and resources for students to develop self and social awareness among students. School counselors can also use the results to work with students to psycho-educate about the importance of anger management, forgiving nature, and acceptance of rejection to instill self-management skills. This study also provides comprehensive reflection on rejection sensitivity, forgiveness, and anger expression among school children for future researchers.

5   Conclusion

Boys from the private school system have higher anger rejection sensitivity, externalizing anger expression, feelings of rejection, hostility, and violence in comparison to girls. Furthermore, girls from private schools have higher anxious rejection sensitivity, forgiveness tendency, and internalized anger expression than boys.

The present study is limited to students of the school which restricts the generalizability of the results to the population at large. More research could be done on different walks of life to understand the concept of gender discrimination and ecology impacts on the emotional development of people. Nonetheless, the latest study had been adequately powered, the findings support the need for replication in a mixed-gender sample to investigate potential sex differences in these effects. During the survey, a large amount of data was discarded due to incomplete forms because less time was given to students by the teachers in comparison to the allotted time by the school administration for filling the forms.

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