The Study Exploring the Causes of Moral Decay in Society: A Mixed Method Analysis

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Contents:

Abstract: *This study explored the current status of moral decay in society followed by identifying the causes behind it. The study opted a Mixed Methods Research Design for the research. The quantitative data has been gathered from conveniently selected 500 participants through a researcher made Thurstone scale to identify the priorities and the method of Borda Count Method by Benini, (2013) was used to explore the optimum choice of participants, whereas the qualitative data has been collected from purposively selected 33 participants through a structured interview. The participants were the representatives of both male and female, urban and rural society members based at Punjab Province. The results indicated that the existing status of morality is not satisfactory in the province. The study revealed that inadequacy of religious education, the influence of media, poor parenting, injustice in society, economic disparities, materialistic approach, discriminatory rule of law and absence of content in school curriculum are the main causes of the moral decay in society. Thus, the study recommends the integration of moral and character education, Islamic values and ethical practices in the curriculum at all levels with practical and operational approach.*

Key Words: Moral Decay, Ethical and Moral Values, Community, Thurstone Scale, Borda Count Method

Introduction

Decay of morality means moral corruption or depravity. It refers to the process of moral degradation. This leads to a decrease in the quality of life, therefore, the country as a whole suffers. Morality is the base of any society, and the moral decay brings its death. Without moral values society become hollow or dead (Gogo, 2020). There is a link between religion and moral or ethical values (John & Enang, 2022). The ethical and spiritual values are important elements in resolving ethical issues (Gorain, Nayek, & Saha, 2022) and decision making process in all spheres of life so it may play an effective role not only in well-being of a person

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but also for the community and the world at larger as they share the same ground (Göçen & Özgan, 2018). Moral decay is the deterioration of the qualities that comprise the fundamental values of the human soul. Meng (2016) describes as the morality is synergistic because morality is at the heart of leadership that ensures morality. The fundamental values of a human soul are compassion, empathy love and kindness. Love, compassion and empathy give way to the latter if we as a civilization can change the way of negative thinking that is needed to end such a thing (Ezeonwumelu, 2021). We were created with these loving qualities ingrained in our souls and it has become a seemingly impossible task to view the world otherwise. According to Issa and Pick, (2011) it is the ability that leads us in establishing a deep spiritual association with God. However, these are the fundamental qualities of God (Kabiru, 2019). Our Creator's self, within all human life will fight forever to be valued and adhered to. He will never leave human life and the soul that drives us all. The more we fight against negativity and the desire to give in to the negative perception of the darkness here on Earth, the more Our Creator's greatness will shine through us all, the easier life on Earth will become. The aim of education is to teach values to create harmony in personality and to help in maintaining harmony in the society (Naragatti, et. al, 2019). Nagât, &-Titiana (2020) viewed it as a socio-political phenomenon in a result of social, economic, political, legal or other type of causes. Hang Lin (2016) highlighted moral decay of ethical awakening in China. Mahmood & Aziz (2018) and Shakil & Akhtar (2012) in Pakistan have worked on ethical and moral values. Kagema (2022) assessed the major moral and social challenges faced by the secondary students of Kenya, whereas Alvi, Khanam, and Kalsoom, (2020) analyzed the secondary curriculum in Punjab regarding ethical and moral education and presented similar findings that school curriculum lacked content for moral and ethical values.

Moral Maturity

A beautiful life starts with a beautiful mind. Kind hearts are the gardens, kind thoughts are the roots, kind words are the blossoms, and kind deeds are the fruit. This means the seeds of goodness are sown in the mind which translate into actions; the ultimate requirement for the expressions of a morally matured mind. A society is always in dire need of moral and upright minds to promote healthy societies (Yunus, 2021). This relates to Aristotle's notion of practical wisdom (Liszka, 2002; Wen, Zhang, Li, Sun & Zheng, 2022).). Nobody can deny the importance of moral education, which needs to be inculcated to create conscientious mind to discern right from the wrong to produce good practical results (Arhas, Suprianto, Saleh, Niswaty & Jamaluddin, 2022). There is not any magic stick which can do wonders to take up people to the citadel of mental moral maturity to exhibit the supreme qualities, which give birth to noble actions in the society. It is an uphill task which needs patience, perseverance, hard work and great self-control to enjoy the bliss of morality in the society. The persistent efforts bear fruit (Ezeonwumelu, 2021).

Do good and have good, becomes like a chain which passes goodness all around. Respect for others is demonstrated in numerous ways by a morally mature person. Justice and care are moral ideals that represent people's inherent worth. Morally mature persons recognize that they are a member of a social network that is interconnected (Love & Guthrie, 1999). People progress from dependence, in which they define themselves according to the opinions of others, to independence. Let other people speak and express themselves and then listen to them empathetically that reflects the dignity of mature minds and can do wonders in alleviating the pain and sufferings of others. Negation of self and listen to other people and giving them importance is the height of nobility and peace (Ahmed & Shahzad, 2021).

Rationale of the Study

The increasing number of crime reports and the proliferation of courts show vivid signs of the decline of morality in our society (Rasool, Mustafa & Atif, 2021). This is the biggest challenge to legislators, judicial personnel and social workers. If we look around in society, we see chaotic and tense

environments and emotional and intellectual anarchy (Ashraf, Ali, & Ullah, 2021). The crime rate in Pakistan in 2018 was 660,055 according to (Shah, Khan, Saboor & Iftikhar-ul-Husnain, 2022). The Punjab police reported an overall 408,064 crime incidents (murder attempted murder, hurt, kidnapping, rape etc.) during the first 10 months of this year as compared to 333,376 cases reported during the same period last year. These crime reports and situation of moral degeneration induces the need for current research.

Objectives of the Study

The study has following objectives:

1. To determine the causes of moral degeneration perceived and prioritized by Pakistani community members
2. To identify the optimum cause of moral decay through Borda Count Method
3. To explore the severity and causes of moral decay in the society voiced by the members of Pakistani community

Methodology

This researcher adopted a Mixed Methods research design (Quan-Qual) under the post-positivistic paradigm to capture the phenomenon of moral degeneration in Pakistani society wholistically. The purpose was to develop an in-depth understanding of causes of moral decay in society. To examine and identify the status of morality and causes of moral decay the researcher developed a questionnaire based on literature review as a quantitative method to know the preferences of the participants using Thurstone scale to measure the attitude of the participants by responding various statements. The statements also helped to find out how do respondents feel as well as, how strongly do they feel in that way, and later Borda count method was used to investigate further nature of prioritized items on Thurstone Scale. To investigate further and to explore the subjectivity of the phenomena, a structured interview was also conducted from 33 selective participants of the study. All the members of the Pakistani society either in rural or urban area, public, private or self-employed male or female uneducated, literate or highly educated, young or older were selected as the population of the study. For the quantitative study, convenient sampling technique was. Almost 500 questionnaires were distributed for the collection of quantitative data and 33 participants (from all spheres of life) through purposive sampling were interviewed for the collection of qualitative data from the selected population. Various procedures were implemented during the study to assure the study's trustworthiness. Pilot testing with twenty people was used to establish the quantitative instrument's reliability. The inter-rater reliability of the Thurstone scale was calculated to be 0.76, therefore, it was employed for further data collection. By conducting three pilot interviews, the qualitative instrument was made authentic as stated by Cohen "pilot testing assures context-and situation specificity, authenticity, and comprehensiveness" (Cohen et al., 2007, p.149).
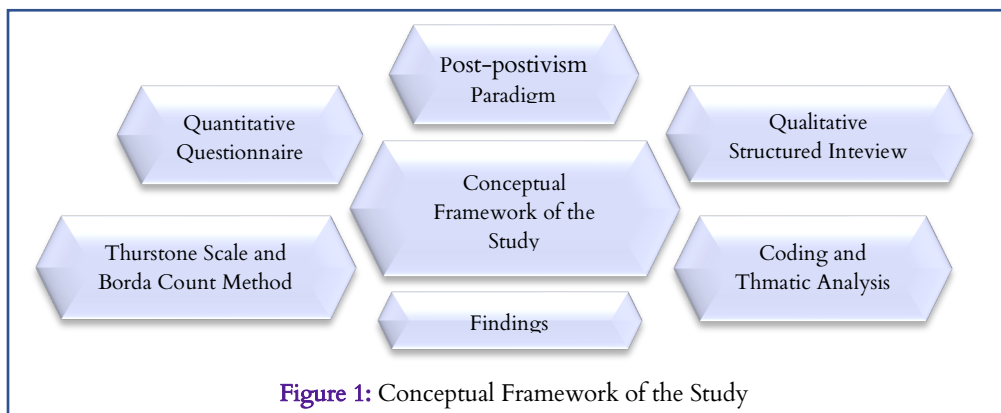
Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

Table 1. Demographic Information of the Participants of the Quantitative Study

Participants	Percentage
Male	38.6%
Female	61.4%
Below matric	45%
Graduate	36%
Post Graduate	19%
Urban representation	59%
Rural representation	41%
Below 30 (age Group)	49%
Above 30 (age Group)	51%

Results of the Quantitative Study

To apply Thurstone Scale, the participants were given questionnaires and the participants of the study rated the scaled items from 11, for the most preferred and 1 to the least preferred items. According to the result of questionnaire the findings were as followed:

Table 2. Results of Causes of Ethical and Moral Degradation in the Society

Options	Mode	Mean	Median	IQR
Home Environment	11	6.328	6.000	7
Remoteness of religious and ethical values and spirit	11	6.140	6.000	6
Absence of opportunities of character building	7	6.070	6.000	4.25
Influence of media	7	6.667	7.000	5
Absence of a role model	6	5.904	6.000	5
Lack of grooming	5	6.496	7.000	5
Social backwardness	5	5.886	6.000	5
Less exposure	1	5.583	5.000	5
Ineffective Curriculum	1	5.364	5.000	6
Egoism and selfishness	1	5.917	6.000	6
Poverty, Increasing inflation rate	1	6.105	6.000	6

The stake holders of our study thought that our home environment and remoteness of religious and ethical spirit and values are the main causes of our moral degradation. Home environment with mode 11, mean 6.328, median 6 and IQR 7, Remoteness of religious and ethical spirit and values with mode 11, mean 6.140, Median 6 and IQR 6, Absence of opportunities of character building with mode 7, mean 6.070, Median 6 and IQR 4.25, Influence of media with mode 7, mean 6.667, Median 7 and IQR 5, Absence of a role model with mode 6, mean 5.904, Median 6 and IQR 5, Lack of grooming with mode 5, mean 6.496, Median 7 and IQR 5, Social backwardness with mode 5, mean 5.886, Median 6 and IQR 5, Less exposure with mode 1, mean 5.583, Median 5 and IQR 5, Ineffective Curriculum with mode 1, mean 5.364, Median 5 and IQR 6, Egoism and selfishness with mode 1, mean 5.917, Median 6 and IQR 6, Poverty, Increasing inflation rate with mode 1, mean 6.105, Median 6 and IQR6.
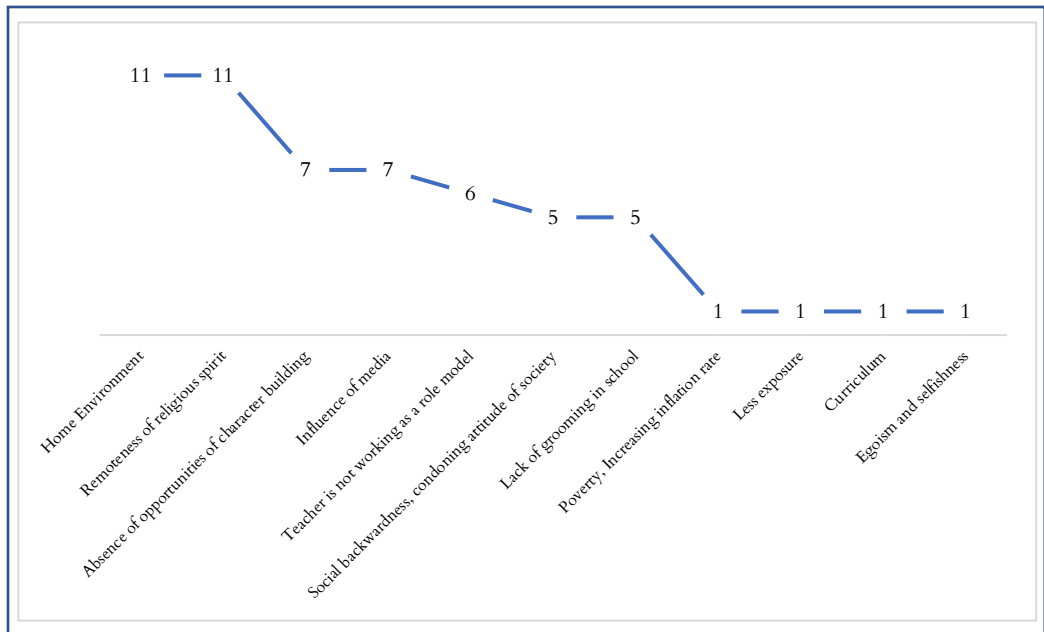
Figure 2: Line Chart Showing Mode of the Priorities of the Study Participants.

Borda Count Method

Borda Count Method, known as a voting system based on consensus, instead of the option that is prioritized by the majority as a substitute, the most prioritized option by the majority be taken as the best as according to Benini, (2013), every unfulfilled need has a degree of severity inherent in it. It is statistically independent of the severity of other items, but the challenge is to find a common meaning across the categories which has the optimum worth. The total number of choices for each item were multiplied by the order of the scale and sum was drawn for each category of the questionnaire to get Borda count (Black, 1976: Lansdowne, & Woodward,1996; Lumini & Nanni, 2006; Benini, 2013).

Table 3. Causes of moral decay using Borda Count Method (In Descending Order)

Ooptions	Order	Application of Borda Count Onvparticipants Selected these Options										Sum
Remoteness of religious and ethical values	3	14*1 =14	27*2 =54	23*3 =69	15*4 =60	22*5 =110	24*6 =144	18*7 =126	17* =136	21*9 =189	19*10 =190	28*11 =308	1600
Influence of media	10	11*1 =11	16*2 =32	16*3 =48	20* =80	22*5 =110	15*6 =90	30*7 =210	25*8 =200	18*9 =162	28*10 =280	27*11 =297	1520
Lack of grooming	7	3*1 =3	21*2 =42	15*3 =45	20*4 =80	34*5 =170	20*6 =120	26*7 =182	21*8 =168	25*9 =225	27*10 =270	16*11 =176	1481
Home Environment	1	20*1 =20	22*2 =44	26*3 =78	20*4 =80	16*5 =80	13*6 =78	12*7 =84	16*8 =128	25*9 =225	17*10 =170	42*11 =462	1449
Poverty, Increasing inflation rate	2	33*1 =33	13*2 =26	21*3 =63	13*4 =52	14*5 =70	21*6 =126	19*7 =133	22* =176	24*9 =216	25*10 =250	23*11 =253	1398

Ooptions	Order	Application of Borda Count Onvparticipants Selected these Options										Sum
Absence of opportunities of character building	8	9*1 =9	21*2 =42	25*3 =75	26*4 =104	18*5 =90	24*6 =144	29*7 =203	19*8 =152	19*9 =171	24*10 =240	14*11 =154	1384
Egoism and selfishness	11	3981 =39	15*2 =30	15*3 =45	12*4 =48	19* =95	24*6 =144	21*7 =147	20*8 =160	19*9 =171	19*10 =190	26*11 =286	1355
Absence of a role model	9	21*1 =21	19*2 =38	20*3 =60	26*4 =104	15*5 =75	30* =180	17* =119	27*8 =216	14*9 =126	27*10 =270	13*11 =143	1352
Social backwardness	4	13*1 =13	21*2 =42	25*3 =75	14*4 =76	28*5 =140	22*6 =132	28*7 =196	19* =152	25*9 =225	17*10 =170	11*11 =121	1342
Less exposure	5	26*1 =26	22*2 =44	25*3 =75	14*4 =76	25*5 =125	20*6 =120	14*7 =98	21* =168	26*9 =234	23*10 =230	7*11 =77	1273
Ineffective Curriculum	6	35*1 =35	26*2 =52	13*3 =39	44*4 =132	13*5 =65	20*6 =120	17*7 =119	27*8 =216	15* =135	9*10 =90	20*11 =220	1223
Remoteness of religious and ethical values	3	14*1 =14	27*2 =54	23*3 =69	15*4 =60	22*5 =110	24*6 =144	18*7 =126	17* =136	21*9 =189	19*10 =190	28*11 =308	1600

According to the result after applying Borda Count Method, the most prioritized cause ranked for the moral decay by the participants of the study was 'Remoteness of religious and ethical values' with a score 1600, Absence of opportunities of character building scored 1384 as moderate and Ineffective Curriculum with a Borda Count score 1223 as least preferred by the participants. So it was concluded that the Moral decay is mainly caused due to home environment and remoteness from religious and ethical values.

Qualitative Phase of the Study (Coding and Thematic Analysis)

To conduct the second phase of the study, the 33 structured interviews were conducted from the selected participants of the study related to all walks of life mentioned below.

Table 4. Demographic Information of the Participants of the Qualitative Study (Interview)

Participant No	Gender	Qualification	Career
P–1	Male	Below Matric	Private sector student
p–2	Male	Below Matric	Self– employed
P–3	Female	Below Matric	Housewife
P–4	Female	Below Matric	Govt sector student
P–5	Male	Below Matric	Private sector student
P–6	Female	Below Matric	Self employed
P–7	Female	Below Matric	Govt sector student
P–8	Male	Below Matric	Govt sector student
P–9	Female	Below Matric	Businessman
P–10	Female	Post–Graduate	Private sector job
P–11	Male	Post–Graduate	Govt sector job
p–12	Female	Post–Graduate	Private sector job
P–13	Female	Post–Graduate	Private sector job

Participant No	Gender	Qualification	Career
P-14	Male	Post-Graduate	Private sector job
P-15	Male	Post-Graduate	Govt sector job
P-16	Female	Graduate	Housewife
P-17	Female	Graduate	Housewife
P-18	Female	Graduate	Govt sector job
P-19	Female	Graduate	Housewife
P-20	Female	Post-Graduate	Students
P-21	Male	Post-Graduate	Politician
p-22	Female	Post-Graduate	Social worker
P-23	Male	Post-Graduate	Educationist
P-24	Male	Post-Graduate	Educationist
P-25	Female	Post-Graduate	Curriculum Developer
P-26	Male	Post-Graduate	Religious Scholar
P-27	Male	Post-Graduate	Social Reformer
P-28	Male	Post-Graduate	Social Reformer
P-29	Female	Post-Graduate	Religious Scholar
P-30	Male	Post-Graduate	Social Reformer
P-31	Female	Graduate	House wife
p-32	Male	Graduate	Businessman
P-33	Female	Post-Graduate	Private sector job

Structured Interview, Coding and Thematic Analysis

Consensus was found that the existing status of morality in Pakistani society was diminishing. Whereas, participants described that ethics and morality are essential for the efficiency and effectiveness of society and its members. There were variety of opinions about indication of causes of moral decay and its connectivity and usefulness with values. The participants mentioned major causes of moral decay as; religious inadequacy, social media, lack of clarity, typical mind-set, unclear concept of right and wrong, unhealthy environment, non-seriousness on the part of teachers and the taught and ignorance on the part of institutions who do not provide their students guidance about moral and religious values. P-1,P-8, and P-5 intellectually concluded, "*Lack of seriousness from our students and educational institutes, who do not try to understand students and guide them. Materialistic values are preferred over human values but a lot of institutes do make it so, unfortunately.*" P-9 described the situation in these words, "*Wrong people are introduced as role models for the society instead of honest and pious people*". While the P-10, P-14 told the causes of moral degradation as poor parenting, influence of media, family problems and increased and unwatched freedom, no knowledge of values, absence of school and curriculum role for teaching of ethics and morality, therefore, these are not exhibited in their practical life. The changing status of media and globalization which had totally changed the youth's perspective along with the value system. P-14 said, "*Substandard or no education, disparities in wealth system and injustice in the society are some main causes of unethical behavior of young generation. In addition, social media is also contributing because in Pakistan there is not any law to control unethical behavior of people*". P-15 and P-20 enumerated the causes of moral decay as absence of any role model, blindly following media and unawareness on the part of parents, materialistic approach and remoteness from religion. P-16, P-17, P-18 and P-20 categorized the Values and Ethics as:

▪ Respect for religious, spiritual and cultural values, social justice, freedom and democracy.

- Integrity i.e. being honest and reliable
- Care for other human beings
- Trust being fair and honest

P-21 analysed the causes of moral decay as, "*Ideology of Pakistan is based on ideology of Islam which is being ignored*". He expressed hopelessly that there are thousands of reasons for moral decay in our society like there is no fear of Allah, sense of liability to the supreme power because materialistic approach is in vogue. He exclaimed with sorrow that standard of respect is changed as parents and elders are no more role models for our youth. In the opinion of P-24, intolerance, poverty and lack of opportunities of character building due to ineffective curriculum at school level, economic disparity, globalization and commercialism have affected the communities on ethical and moral grounds. P-22, P-23, P-24, P-25 said, "*We are in a*

vicious circle and people of values are not being produced". Commented P-26, "*Remoteness from religion, absence of mentors to follow as a role model and lack of attention towards character building are the reasons for moral degeneration.*" It was commented by P-27 that, "*Self-actualization does not exist, nobody is ready to take initiatives, there is gap between theory and practice and there is no role model*". The point of view of P-28 was, "*We kill our conscience by doing bad deeds. Even the custodians of children show their bad conduct in front of them*". P-30 commented, "*Moral decay is related to the mind set of parents, they adopt an authoritative attitude in the brought up of their kids*". Another opinion was described by P-32, "*parents make their children conscious of worldly status and deliberately infuse in them a materialistic approach and that is why they do not learn the dignity of humanity and hard work*".

Table 5. Themes Emerging from the Qualitative Study

Existing Status of Morality	Need of Effectiveness	Causes of Moral Decay	Connectivity with Values
Very low	Primary and basic	Religious inadequacy	Moral education
Least level	Must be on priority basis	Influence of media	Character education
Low degree	Needs to be worked on	Poor parenting	Islamic values
Not among preferences	Be made effective for social influence	The values are not taught	Highlighting the values
Not satisfactory	Extremely vital role	Injustice in society	Ethical practices
Not implored	Major role	Economic disparities	Consciousness of values
Secondary	Pivotal role	No role model	
Negligible		Materialistic approach	
A very low place		Remoteness of religion	
Rare		Intolerance	
Vicious circle		No fear of Allah. sense of liability to the supreme power	Bridging the gap between theory and practice
Deteriorating		Discriminatory rule of law	
Not up to the mark		Lack of harmony	

1. According to the qualitative findings of the study it was revealed that inadequacy of religious education, influence of media, poor parenting, injustice in society, economic disparities, materialistic approach,

discriminatory rule of law and absence of content in school curriculum are the main causes of the moral decay in the society. And as per results of Thurstone scale and the Borda Count Method, home environment

and remoteness from religious and ethical values were with the most prioritized causes of the moral decay in the society.

2. The qualitative findings of the study show that the existing status of morality is not satisfactory, in Pakistan and it is also concluded that the ethical and moral values may play a fundamental role for the uplift of the society.

3. The findings show that the ethical and moral values can be promoted in the society by giving moral and character education initially at home and inculcating the Islamic values and ethical practices in the curriculum of our educational institutes as most of the participants indicated connectivity between moral decay and spiritual and ethical values so the usefulness and effectiveness of spiritual and ethical values may bring moral uplift in the society.

Conclusion and Discussion

The current study supported the findings of the previous studies held at national and international level on the aspects of deteriorating situation of ethics and morality in the society (Sabir & Nasir, 2014; Riaz, 2011; Shakil & Akhtar, 2012) in Pakistan, Gogo, (2020) in Kenea, Kabiru (2019) in Nigeria, Nagat (2020) in Romania and Hang Lin (2016) in China, Kagema (2022) in Kenya. When the minor actions are not curtailed and controlled, there is strong probability of getting momentum for committing immoral things without any fear of law or one's own conscience. Children develop a conscience in their very early years as they figure out that certain behaviors displease their beloved caregivers. Then they learn

to internalize the difference between good and bad thoughts and behaviors on their own. When a child is ignored, not nurtured, yelled at, and hit, they never develop a conscience or ethical and moral values. They are always waiting for an external correction to stop their behavior. Moral decay is resulted from human beings desensitized from these ever important fundamental ethical and moral values. Things go worst when they see practice of crimes and hatred in their daily lives and witness frequent break of laws and rules, lack of compassion and empathy, remoteness from religion, scarcity of honest role models, preferences of material values and sense of blind competition, resultantly, they develop a superficial way of life with shallow actions having no respect for humanity.

Recommendations

1. Remoteness from religious and ethical values is the main cause of moral decay. Moral decay is caused by the erosion of spiritual and ethical values, therefore, religious education should be part of the curriculum at every educational level.

2. As the ethical and moral values have the fundamental role for the uplift of a society, so they must be promoted by giving moral and character education at homes and educational institutions through ethical practices by elders.

3. Law enforcement must be established in all spheres of life by the government and institutions.

4. Media should be constrained through certain rules and should not promote crimes in the society.

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