

THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF MEDIA AND MENTORSHIP ON THE MORALITY OF YOUTHS

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ABSTRACT

Decency and morality are foundational principles guiding human behaviour and social interaction. In recent times, these values face increasing threats from the pervasive influence of media and mentorship, both of which have become significant forces in shaping youth behaviour. This study examines the negative impact of music, films, print media, peer influence, and mentorship on the morality of youths, highlighting their contributions to moral decline and weakened social cohesion. Anchored on Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) and Gerbner and Gross's Cultivation Theory (1976), the research explains how repeated exposure to immoral behaviours in media and negative mentorship fosters imitation, desensitisation, and distorted moral perceptions among young people. The study reveals that modern music and movies often glorify violence, sexual immorality, and substance abuse, while sensational journalism, erotic print media, and advertising normalize obscenity and materialism. Social media amplifies peer pressure, reinforcing unrealistic lifestyles and promoting conformity to indecency. Similarly, unethical mentorship, particularly from celebrities and influencers, sustains cycles of moral decay by presenting questionable behaviours as aspirational. These influences collectively contribute to societal challenges, including family disintegration, crime, drug abuse, toxic relationships, and the erosion of cultural and religious values. The study concludes that urgent interventions are necessary to address moral decline in contemporary society. Key recommendations include introducing comprehensive media literacy programs in schools, promoting positive role models, strengthening community-driven initiatives, and formulating research-based media content policies. Strong family and educational guidance, these strategies are crucial for cultivating ethical behaviour, fostering resilience against harmful influences, and sustaining a morally grounded society.

Keywords: Music, Movies, Decency, Morality.

Introduction

Foundational ideas that shape human behaviour and social standards are decency and morality. Decency is the attribute of being proper, respectful and in line with society standards, thereby include actions deemed acceptable and suitable within a particular culture. Conversely, morality is the philosophy of good and wrong guiding personal behaviour. Often formed by cultural, religious and philosophical factors, it dictates what is considered virtuous or wicked. These ideas taken together constitute the foundation of ethical conduct, hence guiding people's interactions with one another and their sense of duty inside society. Media and societal influences are major factors in determining human behaviour and moral views in modern society (Manakbayeva, 2023). The growth of several media channels including television, music, print and social media has changed the ways in which people engage with information and enjoyment. Often acting as catalysts for behavioural change, these platforms not only mirror society values but also actively shape them (Bieniek, 2024).

The intersection of music, films, print media, friends and mentoring creates a complicated environment where moral decay might happen (Cizek & Uricchio, 2022). Some modern music, films and books promote ideas of violence, drug use and sexual promiscuity, hence fostering a cultural background that normalises such conduct (Hill et al., 2023). Peer pressures and mentoring can also confirm or question these signals, hence causing a fall in personal values and ethical standards. This multifarious issue begs important issues concerning the effect of various factors on personal morality and social cohesion.

This paper intends to investigate the interactions between several media types, societal effects and moral decay. The study aims to find trends and results of these impacts by looking at the particular ways in which music, films, print media, peers and mentoring shape moral beliefs and actions. The importance of this study rests in its capacity to notify mental health experts, lawmakers, parents, teachers and others about the urgent need to tackle moral deterioration in society. Developing efficient plans to encourage decency and ethical behaviour in an ever more complicated media environment depends on knowledge of these processes.

Although music has always been a means of expression, many contemporary genres encourage violence, drug misuse, and sexual immorality. These themes, which are frequently adopted by young people, have the potential to desensitize listeners by normalizing hazardous conduct and obfuscating moral boundaries. With vivid representations of sex, violence, and drug use, music videos magnify these messages (Perrott, 2023). They also deploy potent audiovisual narratives to influence attitudes. More acceptability of violence, misogyny, and risky lifestyles has been connected to genres such as hip-hop, rap, and some rock subcultures (Thompson et al., 2023). According to research, exposure leads to incorrect perspectives on relationships and morality, violence, and desensitization, all of which contribute to the moral degradation of society as a whole (Krahé, 2024).

In addition to music, other media like television, movies, and social media platforms have a big impact on how people think and act (Amedie, 2015). Movies and television programs frequently feature violent, sexual, or ethically dubious material, and they occasionally glorify ways of living that go against social and cultural norms. Viewers who are repeatedly exposed to such depictions may become desensitized, which will eventually promote the acceptance of actions that were previously deemed abnormal (Krahé, et al.m 2011). This effect has been exacerbated by social media, which offers continuous, unfiltered access to content, fostering an atmosphere where trends propagate quickly and have an immediate impact on youthful audiences.

Perceptions of normalcy and morality are also shaped by advertising (Wasserman, & Bates, 2017). To get attention, many ads use sexualized imagery, materialism, or inflated standards of success and beauty. These signals shape people's perceptions of themselves and others by quietly reinforcing cultural norms that associate value with income, prestige, or physical appearance. This might eventually result in undesirable behaviors like consumerism, body dissatisfaction, or putting appearance before content.

Another powerful medium is video games, which immerse users in interactive worlds that can teach and amuse. Many games encourage creative and problem-solving skills, but others have a strong emphasis on crime, violence, or overly sexualized plots (Schrier, 2016). Compared to passive media consumption, the possibility of normalizing aggression or risky behavior is increased when players actively participate in these settings. Despite offering entertainment and interaction, these media also bring up urgent moral concerns regarding their combined impact on people and society at large.

Theoretical Framework

Based on Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977), people pick up behaviors, attitudes, and values through modeling, imitation, and observation. Individuals, particularly young people, are prone to imitate behaviors they witness frequently in the media or in the actions of powerful people. Young viewers may view violence, sexual immorality, and substance addiction as rewarding or appropriate when these behaviors are glorified in the media. Social learning theory, as it applies to this study, describes how youths' moral underpinnings are weakened when they are repeatedly exposed to harmful media content and bad mentorship models, which encourages replication of such behaviors.

The Cultivation Theory, which was created by George Gerbner and Larry Gross in 1976, serves as the second theoretical pillar. According to this idea, people's perceptions of social reality are shaped by prolonged exposure to media content, frequently aligning them with the recurrent themes depicted in the media. It highlights how regularly consuming particular media messages can shape one's worldview to mirror those media representations, whether or not they are true. According to the hypothesis, teenagers who are constantly exposed to morally repugnant media and receive inadequate mentoring develop a skewed moral view that leads them to regard unethical behavior as normal and desirable.

Influence of Movies Morality

Movies have a huge influence on how people in society conceptualise morality since they frequently depict violent acts, criminal acts and sexual content in ways that have the potential to distort audience attitudes. As a result of the repeated presentation of these themes, viewers may come to believe that the behaviours in question are typical or acceptable. It has been demonstrated through research that prolonged exposure to violent films can lead to desensitisation, which in turn reduces the emotional response to cases of actual violence and criminal activity (Aneesha et al., 2023). prolonged exposure to violent films can lead to desensitisation, which in turn reduces the emotional response to cases of actual violence and criminal activity (Phan & Gaylord-Harden, 2022).

A disturbing pattern that may be observed in today's media is the normalisation of unethical behaviours throughout the medium of film (Paasonen, 2024). people that participate in morally problematic behaviours, such as stealing, lying and infidelity, are frequently portrayed as heroes or anti-heroes in widely watched films (Perreault, 2023). These films highlight people who indulge in these types of actions. As a result of this framing, the distinctions between right and wrong can

become blurry, which can cause audiences to rethink the conventional moral ideals. It is possible that viewers will adopt similar views and behaviours as they become more familiar with these individuals, which will further contribute to a culture that is showing a deterioration in morality. The proliferation of streaming services has brought about a revolution in the industry of media consumption (Vrana, & Das, 2023). These services have made it possible to access an unprecedented variety of information, including films that may encourage immoral behaviour. When algorithms are used to curate personalised recommendations, users are frequently presented with content that is becoming increasingly explicit and morally dubious (Haapoja, et al., 2024). The ease with which immoral content can be accessed might contribute to the normalisation of such content, particularly among younger audiences who may lack the critical thinking skills necessary to recognise ethical concerns. Streaming services have a significant impact, which highlights the importance of having a heightened awareness of the information that is being consumed and the potential impact that it may have on morals.

The influence that films have on the behaviour of young people and the norms of society cannot be emphasized (Bale, 2023). Young audiences are especially susceptible to being influenced and they frequently model their actions and attitudes after what they see on TV throughout their formative years. It has been shown through research that watching films that represent sexual promiscuity and violence can result in an increase in aggressive behaviour, a decrease in empathy and risky sexual behavior (Atienza, et al., 2024). In light of the fact that films are responsible for shaping cultural narratives and societal expectations, the possibility of a decrease in morality has become an urgent worry, which calls for a critical analysis of the content that is being produced and consumed.

Effects of Print Media on Morality

In recent years, sensational journalism has emerged as a prominent characteristic of print media, frequently placing an emphasis on shock value rather than ethical reporting (Aiko, 2024). This strategy has the potential to result in the glorifying of immoral behaviour, as the public's attention is generally drawn to tales that focus on criminal activity, scandal and controversy. Sensationalist portrayals of events have the potential to alter public perception, so contributing to the development of a culture that is more tolerant of immoral behaviour. As a consequence of this, sensational journalism not only reflects the ideals of society, but it also actively contributes to a slide in morality by affecting the public conversation around decency and morality (Steinberg, 2023).

For a long time, erotic literature and graphic publications have been subjected to criticism for the impact they have on people's conceptions of morality (Sanchini, et al., 2022), though these days such materials have become a new normal for persons and organizations, to the point that almost every wrong is seen as right, as long as it is accepted by the setting. It is common for these media to portray sexual relationships in a manner that downplays the significance of intimacy and encourages the development of false expectations. Consuming such content can result in skewed perceptions of sexuality, which in turn contributes to a culture that places a higher value on the satisfaction of one's physical desires than on the development of emotional connections. Furthermore, the normalisation of explicit content in print media can weaken conventional moral standards, establish a society where obscenity is increasingly tolerated and contribute to the erosion of traditional moral norms.

There is a considerable contribution made by the bias of the media to the promotion of obscenity over conventional moral standards. Storylines that respect ethical norms are frequently

pushed to the background by many print media publications (Bernard, 2022), which give more weight to dramatic tales and perspectives that are contentious. This prejudice can result in an unbalanced portrayal of society issues, which in turn can cause audiences to develop an erroneous understanding of what constitutes morality. It is concerning that the tendency of print media to promote indecent content raises concerns about the erosion of cultural and ethical foundations (Prasetya, et al., 2024). This is because print media continues to shape public perceptions.

Advertisements are a powerful force that shape societal norms and behaviours (Holm, 2023) and they frequently reinforce negative messages about things that are considered to be moral. With the intention of capturing the attention of consumers, numerous advertisements make use of sexual imagery, violence and materialism (Bains, & Dewani, 2022). This serves to normalise behaviours that may be in conflict with traditional moral values. This reinforcement of bad behaviours can have an effect on individual attitudes as well as the expectations of society, which can contribute to a culture in which indecency is not only tolerated but applauded. The pervasive nature of advertising highlights the necessity of critical engagement with the messages that are conveyed by the media and the consequences that these messages have for morality.

Influence of Peers in Determining Morality

There is a powerful social force known as peer pressure, which has the potential to significantly influence the values and behaviours of individuals (Welch, 2023). It is possible for individuals to sacrifice their personal morals in order to conform to the norms of their peer groups as they strive to gain acceptance within those groups. An especially pronounced manifestation of this phenomenon can be seen among adolescents, who are frequently more susceptible to the influence of outside factors. In the face of peer pressure, a decline in personal values can result in the establishment of a culture in which indecency is considered to be the norm (Olawajun, 2023), which further contributes to the perpetuation of moral decline within communities.

The landscape of peer influence has been transformed as a result of the proliferation of social media (Luttrell, & Wallace, 2024), which has provided individuals with a platform to share their lives and behaviours with a more extensive audience. In the pursuit of validation and approval on social platforms, one may find themselves adopting behaviours that are not necessarily congruent with their core beliefs and principles (Davlembayeva, et al., 2025). Additionally, the prominence of curated and frequently unrealistic images of life on social media can create pressure to comply to particular norms, including those linked to indecency. This pressure can be a source of stress for individuals. The interplay between online and offline influences on morality is brought to light by the role that social media plays in shaping the behaviours of peers.

There have been several subcultures among young people that openly encourage immorality and undermine the traditional moral standards that have been established (Asirifi, et al., 2023). These subcultures generally encourage behaviors such as substance addiction, promiscuity and rebellion against mainstream standards. Case studies of these groups illustrate how peer dynamics can generate circumstances where immoral behavior is welcomed and encouraged.

A holistic approach that places an emphasis on personal principles and critical thinking is required in order to successfully combat the negative impact of peers. Developing high self-esteem and assertiveness skills can be beneficial to individuals since it enables them to stand firm despite the pressure that they face from their peers. In addition, encouraging open communication with adults who are trusted and mentors can be a source of assistance while navigating difficult social circumstances. Educational programs that encourage moral reasoning and ethical decision-making

can also facilitate the empowerment of individuals to resist negative pressures (Rebecchi, et al., 2024), so contributing to the development of a society that is more morally conscious.

The Influence of Mentorship on Morality

Mentorship is frequently considered as a helpful effect, although there are situations where mentors can foster moral deterioration instead of ethical direction. Some mentors may unknowingly promote dubious conduct, either by their acts or the beliefs they preach (Wang et al., 2025). This can create a perplexing situation for mentees, who may struggle to square their mentor's behavior with their own moral values. Recognizing the potential for mentorship to contribute to moral decline is essential for fostering healthy and constructive relationships (Whitlock, 2024).

Celebrities and social media influencers exert enormous power in changing public ideas of morality (Croce et al., 2024). When these personalities support or engage in unethical behaviour, they have the potential to establish a precedent that is problematic for the people who follow them. For some people, the temptation of fame and popularity can cause them to imitate these role models, frequently adopting attitudes and behaviours that are similar to those of the role models. It is imperative that there be critical interaction with media figures and a reevaluation of the ideals that they represent because of the power of role models who do not adhere to ethical standards.

There is the potential for immoral mentoring to have dramatic long-term impacts, which can have a lasting impact on the moral perspective of younger generations for many years to come (Seals, 2022). It is possible for individuals who are exposed to unethical role models to internalise these behaviours, which can lead to a cycle of moral deterioration that can potentially continue for generations. It is possible for this impact to exhibit itself in a variety of ways, such as an increased acceptance of immoral behaviour, a lessened capacity for empathy and a weakening commitment to society ideals. In order to cultivate a future that is more ethically grounded, it is vital to address the implications of mentorship that breaches ethical standards.

Psychological and Societal Consequences of Moral Decline

Moral decline's major effect is the disintegration of family and society values as conventional structures that formerly offered direction and support become weakened (Stivers, 2023). Families may find it difficult to maintain ethical standards as society changes towards acceptance of immorality, which would cause family strife and turmoil. People's varying moral points of view cause a breach that can lead to a loss of community cohesion (Cortes-Capano et al., 2022). The consequences for social stability are significant since the basis of shared values gets more and more splintered.

Moral deterioration is usually followed by a rise in drug use, criminality and toxic relationships. (Muttaqin et al., 2023). Growing public acceptability of unethical behaviour may cause people to feel less limited by moral values, which would increase crime and drug usage. Unhealthy relationships marked by manipulation, aggression and exploitation can also become normal, hence sustaining cycles of abuse and dysfunction (Goel & Kumar, 2024). The link between moral decline and these social problems highlights the critical need of intervention and support to create better communities.

Particularly for disadvantaged groups, exposure to explicit material can have important mental health consequences. Studies show that those who watch a lot of violent or sexually explicit media could become more anxious, depressed and desensitised to actual problems (Piele, 2024). Such exposure's cumulative impact might provide a skewed perspective that affects people's

capacity to interact with society and create good connections. Promoting general well-being and resilience depends on one first addressing the mental health effects of moral decay (Afita & Nuranasmita, 2023).

Moral decline's disintegration of cultural and religious norms is a major result as modern forces increasingly question established ideals (Kukathas, 2022). Changing standards causes society to struggle, which could cause people to conflict with their cultural or religious convictions and hence cause an identity and purpose crisis. As common values that formerly gave a feeling of community and belonging become weakened, this erosion can undermine the social fabric. Fostering a more cohesive and ethically based society depends on an awareness of the consequences of this disintegration.

Strategies for Counteracting Negative Influences

Counteracting bad effects on morality depends on encouraging moral education and ethical media consumption (Sheng, 2023). Schools can be key in teaching kids qualities like honesty, compassion and critical thinking. Teachers can enable people to make educated decisions by including talks on media literacy and the ethical consequences of material consumption. Promoting a more responsible attitude to media consumption by means of moral and ethical debates can also help to create a society of responsibility (Shah, 2025).

Creating a supportive atmosphere that maintains ethical standards depends on strengthening family values and parental direction (Mutaqin et al., 2024). Parents can be main role models, teaching their kids respect, honesty and responsibility. Open family communication can help people talk about moral quandaries and how media affects behaviour. Parents can reduce the bad effects supporting moral decay by actively participating in their children's media usage and offering direction.

Promoting good mentorship and peer influence can help to build a network supporting ethical behavior (Busch et al., 2024). Programs of mentorship linking young people with good role models can promote moral development and personal progress. Furthermore, developing peer relationships that value respect and honesty will enable people to fight bad influences. Communities can strive to build circumstances that support moral development by stressing the need of ethical conduct and responsibility.

A controversial but essential approach to tackling moral decline is advocacy for media rules and censorship (Jarić et al., 2023). Although freedom of speech is a basic right, more and more people are realising the importance of responsible media practices that give audience welfare top priority. Supporting laws restricting the spread of explicit or dangerous material helps to protect vulnerable groups, especially children and teenagers (Organization, 2022). This approach demands a balanced evaluation of artistic freedom and societal responsibility, establishing a media landscape that upholds decency and morality.

Conclusion

All things considered, the investigation of the effects of music, films, print media, friends and mentoring on morality uncovers a complicated interaction of elements supporting moral degradation. From the celebration of violence and sexual immorality in music and movies to the subtle consequences of peer pressure and mentorship, every medium poses particular difficulties. The combined effect of these factors highlights the pressing need for a coordinated effort to tackle the decline of decency and morality in society. Moral degradation has major effects, hence people, families and communities must act aggressively to maintain decency and morality. This means

supporting responsible media practices, encouraging open discussion on moral concerns and supporting ethical media consumption. Giving moral education and positive mentoring top priority will help society to rebuild a basis of ethical values that fosters strong relationships and communal cohesiveness. More study is required to investigate the subtleties of moral decline and the efficacy of different remedial measures. Research on the long-term consequences of exposure to explicit material, the influence of new media channels and the effect of community initiatives on moral growth might offer insightful analysis.

Recommendations

The following are hereby recommended:

1. Students can be empowered to critically assess the content they consume by implementing comprehensive media literacy programs in educational contexts. These seminars ought to cover topics including the influence of advertising, the ethical ramifications of the media and the significance of identifying reliable sources.
2. Increasing community involvement programs can build networks of support that encourage moral principles and ethical conduct. Workshops, conversations and events that highlight the value of morality and decency can be organised by community organisations. These programs can enable people to fend off harmful influences and assist one another in advancing their moral development by creating a feeling of community and shared ideals.
3. In order to offset the impact of negative figures, it is crucial to promote positive role models in the media. The representation of people who are the epitome of moral conduct, integrity and social responsibility should be given top priority in all kinds of media, including social media, television and movies.
4. One important way to lessen the impact of offensive and damaging content is to create research-based media content policies. To create policies that support responsible media use, policymakers should work with researchers, educators and mental health specialists. Age-appropriate content ratings, prohibitions on marketing explicit content to children and incentives for media creators to generate morally sound content are a few examples of this.

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