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The Role of Madrassa Education in Cultivating Moral Excellence: A Qualitative Analysis

Rambel Shah¹, Prof. Dr. Hafiz Muhammad Inamullah²

- 1. PhD Scholar, Institute of Education & Research (IER), University of Peshawar, Peshawar, KhyberPakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Email: <u>rambelshah@gmail.com</u>
- 2. Director, Institute of Education & Research (IER), University of Peshawar, Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Email: <u>hafizinam@uop.edu.pk</u>

Abstract

Madrassa education has long been a basis of Islamic learning, providing students with an inclusive understanding of Islamic principles, values, and practices. This study aimed to explore the multifaceted role of the Madrassa education system in fostering the moral sublimity of the students for societal development and social growth. The nature of this study was purely qualitative and a purposive sampling technique was used. The data was collected from the six respondents including two Muhtamim (Head of the Madrassa), two elementary and secondary school principals, and similarly two parents of those students who enrolled in Madrassas. Two semi-structured interview guides were designed one for Madrassas Muhtamim (Heads of the Madrassas) and principals, and the rest for parents of the tribal district Mohmand, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The collected data from the participants was analyzed using a thematic analysis process. This study revealed that the collaboration of formal education and Islamic teachings provides an attractive lens to examine the complexities of moral growth and societal values in modern societies. This study recommends that the school of general and professional education should be given an opportunity to get training in madrassa education. Moral practices of Islam should be provided to students and the policymakers should formulate such types of policy to declare all types of immoralities as cognizable offenses in the light of Islamic teaching.

Keywords: Mohmand, Madrassa, Education, Moral Sublimity, Students, Islamic Values

Introduction

The role of education is the overall development and uplift of society as a whole has been observed that moral degradation is an everyday practice despite the individuals of the society being educated. They have achieved the highest degrees but their moral capability is at the lowest ebb. It has also been observed that female students are vexed by their so-called highly-educated teachers. Likewise, financial dishonesty also prevails in all the public and private spheres of society. Similarly, the reign of bribery and corruption is flourishing everywhere in the social order despite the reality that the ratio of mundane education in the country is more than fifty percent (Yasir, Ahmed & Anum, 2022). The fact also remains that with the highest ratio of modern education in the country, society is deteriorating morally day by day but on the other hand the students and graduates from the Islamic seminaries are different than the Western education degree holders. They are educationally more advanced; their social behavior is

comparatively more positive and cooperative, while some graduates of the universities are demonstrating such an arrogant and haughty attitude that it is evident that the common man is distressed and disgraced by the hand of the public servants in their respective circle (Nirwana, 2024). Furthermore, the graduates of the Islamic seminaries are demonstrating their exemplary role as comparative members of society. It has also been observed that women are raped and sexually harassed everywhere in the world. A vivid example of this class is the incident of the harassment of a French female senator aged forty-six years by a senior French senator who was sixty-three (Zafarullah & Sarker, 2021).

It has also been observed that women are harassed in their washrooms in the United States of America (USA) and after repeated such practices, the female washrooms were allotted special code numbers, so that they could be saved from sexual victimization. Such types of incidents are very rare at the hands of graduates of Islamic seminaries, the living example of Yvonne Ridley who was in the captivity of the Afghan Taliban, and turned into a Muslim by the extremely good behavior of the Taliban (Ridley, 2014).

Review of the Related Literature

A. Moral Degradation Despite Modern Education in Society

The initiation of modern education was expected to uplift societies, fostering intellectual growth, critical thinking, and moral values. However, contemporary societies across the globe witness a contradictory phenomenon that moral degradation continues despite advancements in education. Moreover, modern education emphasizes cognitive skills and technological literacy but often falls short in imparting ethical values and moral extent to individuals (Parida, & Parida, 2022). Educational institutions, under pressure to produce quantifiable outcomes and secure funding, prioritize academic achievements and employability over character development and moral education (Pasha, 2022). The rapid proliferation of information technology and social media platforms has introduced new challenges to moral education. This digital age offers extraordinary access to information, yet it also exposes individuals to a deluge/inundation of conflicting values, ideologies, and behaviors. Online platforms often propagate exaggeration and moral doctrine, which can destabilize traditional ethical norms and confuse individuals about what is right or wrong (Anjum, 2019).

B. The Impact of Islamic Education on Moral Sublimity amongst Madrassa Students

Islamic education is rooted in the teachings of the Holy Quran and Hadith, primarily imparted in Madrassas, shaping the moral and ethical basis of Muslim students. Islamic education not only focuses on religious knowledge but also emphasizes the cultivation of moral virtuous and character traits (Sahin, 2018). Madrassas serve as centers of learning where students engage in rigorous studies of Islamic theology, jurisprudence, and spirituality under the guidance of knowledgeable scholars (*Ulema*) and teachers (Wijaya, 2021). Madrassas emphasize the importance of embodying Islamic ethics in daily life. Students are encouraged to practice acts of kindness, honesty, humility, and compassion, reflecting the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and the values preserved in the Holy Quran (Herrera, 2000). Islamic education in Madrassas emphasizes character building along with intellectual growth. Teachers in Madrassas not only impart religious knowledge but also serve as role models who represent Islamic values in their behaviors (Sari, Zainiyati & Al Hana, 2020). Through mentorship and guidance of the religious scholars (*Ulema*) in Madrassas, students learn the importance of integrity, respect, and social responsibility, which are essential to moral sublimity in Islam (Rahmah & Ilham, 2022).

C. The Negation of Moral Evils in Islamic Teachings

Islamic teachings, rooted in the Holy Quran and Hadith, provide a comprehensive moral structure that emphasizes the distinctive aspects of Islamic ethics its strong condemnation and negation of moral evils that demoralize individual character, societal harmony, and spiritual well-being. Islamic teachings provide clear guidance on avoiding vices and immoral behaviors, urging believers to adopt virtuous qualities and maintain moral integrity (Haron, Jamil & Ramli, 2020). The Holy Quran denounces a range of moral evils such as lying, cheating, backbiting, and oppression, "And do not mix the truth with falsehood or conceal the truth while you know [it]" [Surah Al-Bagarah, 2:42]. This verse of the Holy Quran highlights the prominence of honesty, truthfulness, and integrity in social and communal relationships (Kakakhel, 2010). Similarly, Hadith literature consists of numerous sayings of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) that condemn the immoral actions of individuals and encourage all their ethical conduct. In this regard, the Holy Prophet (SAW) said, "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should speak good or remain silent" [Bukhari]. The teachings of Islam address that moral evils are harmful to the individual character and their spiritual growth, including egotism, arrogance, greed, jealousy, and dishonesty. The Holy Quran warns against the hazards of arrogance and states, "And do not extend your eyes toward that by which We have given enjoyment to [some] categories of them, [its being but] the splendor of worldly life by which We test them. And the provision of your Lord is better and more enduring" [Surah Al-Kahf, 18:28]. This verse of the Holy Ouran emphasizes the brief and momentary nature of worldly pleasures and cautions against becoming arrogant and boastful due to material belongings or achievements (Khan, 2016). Moreover, the teaching of Islam emphasizes the importance of social justice and equality and condemns all practices that spread cruelty, discrimination, and injustice in society. The Holy Quran advocates for the rights of the oppressed and marginalized, urging believers to stand up against tyranny and uphold justice (Malik & Rasheed, 2024). In this regard, the Holy Quran also states, "O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives" [Surah An-Nisa, 4:135]. This verse stresses the moral obligation to stand up for justice and fairness, even if it conflicts with personal interests or familial ties.

D. Purification of Society from Evils in Islamic History (Prophet and Caliphs Era)

The foundational teachings of Islam, as revealed in the Holy Quran and exemplified by Prophet Muhammad (SAW), laid the foundation for a transformative movement that sought to eradicate ignorance, injustice, immorality, and social inequalities prevalent in pre-Islamic Arabian society (Lapidus, 2014). The Quranic revelation catalyzed social reform, challenging prevalent customs and practices that contradicted Islamic principles of justice, equality, and ethical conduct (Zaman, 2018). The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) actively engaged in social advocacy, promoting virtues such as honesty, integrity, compassion, and respect for human dignity. His teachings emphasized the importance of upholding moral values and treating others with fairness and kindness, transcending tribal loyalties, and fostering a sense of unity and brotherhood among Muslims (Brown, 2011). After the Holy Prophet (SAW), the four rightly guided Caliphs who succeeded him continued the mission of societal purification, striving to establish a just and equitable society based on Islamic principles, emphasized the importance of adherence to Islamic teachings and discouraged practices that deviated from the Holy Quran and Sunnah of the Holy Prophet(SAW) (Purwanto & Mufid, 2024).

E. Horrors of Moral Degradation despite the Advancement of Modern Western Education

The advancement of modern Western education has undoubtedly brought about numerous technological, scientific, and intellectual developments that have reshaped societies and

improved the quality of life, however, alongside these achievements; there has been a disturbing rise in moral degradation, revealed in various forms of societal ills, ethical dilemmas, and cultural decay (Shah, Ullah, & Rehman, 2024). One of the most alarming consequences of moral degradation in our societies is the erosion of traditional ethical values and moral principles that once served as the bedrock of societal norms and individual conduct. As secularism and materialism have gained prominence, there has been a noticeable decline in the emphasis on virtues such as honesty, integrity, compassion, and altruism (Tariq & Adil, 2020). Furthermore, the increase of modern technology and social media platforms has deteriorated the problem of moral degradation by facilitating the broadcasting of harmful content and regularizing so many unethical behaviors (Haron, Jamil & Ramli, 2020). Online anonymity of social media has assisted cyber bullying as well as online harassment, and the spread of misinformation is contributing to the culture of rudeness, disruptiveness, and moral decay of individuals in society (Malik & Rasheed, 2024). The commodification of education and the prioritization of practical and useful goals over holistic development have led to an educational system that often neglects character education and moral development (Rehman, 2019). In pursuit of academic excellence and economic competitiveness, schools and universities focus predominantly on cognitive skills, technical proficiency, and career readiness, ignoring the cultivation of ethical reasoning, critical thinking, and civic responsibility (Rosyad, 2020).

Objectives of the Study

This study is grounded by the following objectives

- 1. To evaluate the moral contribution of the Madrassa students in society
- 2. To highlight the loopholes in the formal education system
- 3. To overcome the imperfection in the moral development of the formal education system

Rational of the Study

This study is the need of the day to draw the attention of the educational authorities and stockholders to understand the moral degradation of the students and also dig out the main cause of this crisis and ascertain why the students of the formal system of education are lag behind in moral progress as compared to the Madrassa students, who have always demonstrated the virtues of tolerance, forbearance, sympathy, and austerity.

Research Methodology

The nature of this study was purely qualitative. The sample of the study was six knowledgeable and export respondents in their respective fields, comprising two religious madrassas' HoDs (Muhtamin), two formal schools' principals, and two parents of those students who quit formal education incomplete and enrolled in the Madrassa education system in tribal district Mohmand, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Two semi-structured interview guides were designed as data collection instruments, one for Madrassa HoDs (Muhtamin) and Principals, and the other for parents' participants. The collected data was arranged properly and purged repetition then analyzed thematically.

Findings of the Study

1.Benefits of Madrassa Education in Moral Sublimity of Society

When the researcher asked questions regarding Madrassa education and its role in the moral sublimity of society, the respondents replied "Madrassa education not only provides religious knowledge but also helps students develop a strong moral compass. In Madrassa we teach our students to practice self-discipline, respect, and tolerance which are essential for students'

character building a harmonious society" (Muhtamim-1). "To maintain our cultural heritage, Islamic values, and moral traditions, the Madrassa education is essential for our young generation. The response also added, "Our students learn from the rich history and principles of Islamic civilization, which helps them to navigate the complexities of modern life challenges with honesty and moral courage" (Muhtamim-2). The formal school principals expressed their viewpoints "...our school focuses on contemporary education but we also recognize the value of Madrassa education in shaping moral values and ethics of the students". He further explained that "Most of our students also attend madrassa education class in the second shift which helps them in developing a solid moral foundation" (Principal-1). "Students who have a Madrassa background are more open-minded and respectful of diverse perspectives" (Principal-2). The parents' viewpoints were recorded as "Madrassa education has been a blessing for my child where he learned the importance of prayer, charity, sympathy, and compassion". The respondent further said, "My son has become more responsible and respectful towards others..." (Parents-1). Similarly, another parent of the student interviewed, "As a father, I want my child to have a strong moral and ethical foundation, and the Madrassa education system has provided all that". He further stated, "My child has learned to think critically about moral issues and to stand up for what is right and what is wrong" (Parents-2).

The data of the current study revealed that Madrassa education raises the qualities of a sense of social responsibility, respect, community service, and active citizenship among students. Moreover, Madrasa education is the complement of modern education which provides a well-rounded and comprehensive education to students and promotes moral sublimity in society.

2. Impact of Moral Degradation in Education Institutions

On questions related to moral degradation in our educational institutions, the Madrassas' Heads shared their viewpoints "Moral degradation is a serious problem and a growing alarm in our institutions. We've noticed a vivid decline in students' respect for authority and a rise in dishonest and irrespect behavior". He further added "We're working to strengthen our moral education programs to address this type of issue" (Madrassa HoD-1). Another respondent shared his insights when the research asked, "The influence of social media and modern technology has exposed our students to some harmful content which leading them toward moral degradation. We're trying to find the solution to filter this content and promote a more wholesome environment" (Madrassa HoD-2). The formal school principals share their views as, "...moral degradation in present days is a societal problem. We observe more bullying, cheating, and disrespect among students. We are trying to implement a character building and moral education program to address these issues" (Principal-1). In this connection one of the respondents said, "Some parents prioritize grades over moral development, which can contribute to moral degradation. He further said, "...and we're engaging with parents to emphasize the importance of moral education" (Principal-2). Parents of the students replied, "As a parent, it's heartbreaking to see my child exposed to immoral behavior in school. I want the school to take a more proactive approach to moral education and discipline" (Parent-1). Another respondent said in this regard, "I think the school must focus more on character building of the students and less on academics. My son's moral well-being is more important than his grades" (Parent-2).

The finding of the study stressed the need for schools to prioritize moral and character-building education and also guided moral values and ethics. The need for moral and values-based education was also emphasized to ensure the well-being and development of the students.

3. Protection against Moral Evils through Religious Education

The respondents shared their insights on questions related to the role of religious education in the elimination of moral evils. The Madrassa HoDs answered the researcher, "Moral education is essential for moral development which provides a comprehensive moral framework for students to navigate life's challenges" (Madrassa HoD-1). Similar responses were noted from the other Madrassa HoD, "We emphasize the importance of compassion, honesty and respect for all individuals, regardless of their background or beliefs as the Holy Quran directs us 'Verily Allah instruct you to do justice and kindness and take care of the relatives and debar you from committing obscenity, vice and rebellion' [Al-Quran Surah Al-Nahal Verse 90]" (Madrassa HoD-2). The formal school principal's viewpoints were recorded as "I believe that moral education is essential for students' development and provides guidance on moral values and ethics" (Principal-1). Principals of the formal schools replied when asked questions by the researcher, "We admit the importance of moral education and incorporate it into our school curriculum to focus on such social values like empathy, kindness, and responsibility" (Principal-2). The parents replied when asked the same questions "Religious education provides a sense of responsibility which is essential for my child's moral growth and future success" (Parent-1). Another respondent in this regard replied "I believe that religious education is the dire need of the day for moral and ethical development of the students" (Parent-2).

The findings of the study revealed that Madrassa education provides a strong base for moral and ethical development. The data of the study also revealed that Madrassa education is necessary for building a solid moral character of the students for providing a sense of responsibility to promote a culture of respect and harmony in society.

4. Moral Development in the Revival of Economic Will-beings

The researcher when inquired to the participants about the Madrassa education system and its role in the revitalization of the economic stability of the people, they answered, "In Madrassa, we teach to our students the importance of responsibility, laborious work, fairness in dealing and honesty which play a key role in building a strong economy" (Madrassa HoD-1). In this regard, another participant of the current study replied, "We focus on the student's character formation and spiritual development in our Madrassa to enable them to contribute to the economy with fair and honest dealing" (Madrassa HoD-2). The same responses of the formal school Principals were recorded when the researcher asked the question about moral development and the economic well-being of the individuals in society, they said, "For economic development moral development is compulsory because moral growth shapes the values and beliefs of our young generation" (Principal-1). It is also noted from the participant of the study that, "Our school counseling the students for their better tomorrow (future) and we teach them the value of teamwork, empathy and different life skills for economic growth and prosperity" (Principal-2). Similarly, parents expressed their views as, "For the future success of my child, I believe in moral growth for economic stability" (Parant-1). This viewpoint of the parent is also recorded as, "Moral development helps my child understand the value of money, resources, and social responsibility". He added, "Moral growth prepares our children for a secure economic future" (Parant-2).

The finding of this study revealed that moral development shapes the values and beliefs of future generations, teaching basic skills like honesty, hard work, and social responsibility. This in turn produces ethical leaders, responsible citizens, and as well as a strong economist.

5. Integration of Contemporary and Madrassa Education for Holistic Educational Development

The respondents of the study shared their views when asked a question about holistic educational development "I accept the importance of integrating modern education with religious studies to produce a moderate individual". He added "In our Madrassa we focus on Islamic values, Arabic, and Ouran and Hadith, along with mathematics, science, and languages to prepare students for the modern world" (Madrassa HoD-1). Another respondent of the study responded when asked the question, "I believe in a balance between religious and contemporary education to equip students with critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and a strong moral extent to succeed in their future endeavors" (Madrassa HoD-2). The school principals replied in this regard, "Due to balanced and integrated education, our students will be confident, compassionate, and successful individuals of the society" (Principal-1). These points were also recorded by the respondent of the study, "In my point of view, provision of comprehensive religious and contemporary education is essential for students to face the challenges of the 21st century" (Principal-2). Parents said in this regard, "A unified education system that incorporates both religious and contemporary aspects will help my child succeed in future life" (Parent-1). Similarly, this is also noted by the parent participant, "I'm in favor of holistic education which is essential for my son to include religious matter, contemporary subjects and physical education to create a useful individual for the family as well as for our society" (Parent-2).

The finding of the study revealed that a unified and integrated education system is the dare need of the day to incorporate both modern curriculum and religious education which help to enable the students to become responsible citizens who contribute positively to society and also able to succeed in the modern world.

Discussion

The fostering of moral values is the very aim of religious education. The present study aimed to dig out the implication of the Madrassa students on the side of moral development in society. As per the objectives of the present study the evaluation of moral advancement and identifying the moral loopholes in formal education this study was conducted. The finding of this study revealed that the behavior of the students of the Islamic seminaries has usually been very positive. The analysis of the data also showed that most of the social and moral evils were vehemently condemned throughout the educational process of the Madrassas. The basic life skills and social attributes are inculcated regularly in the minds of the students. The study of Anjum (2019) is in consonance with the present study that modern education has caused moral degradation. In addition, the study (Pasha, 2022) is also supports the findings of this study that moral advancement could have occurred in students if they educated in Islamic seminaries; where ethics are properly taught. Similarly, the study of Rahmah and Ilham (2022) also coincides with the finding of this study that social responsibility and moral integration can be improved in the Madrassa education system. The findings support the study results of Haron, Jamil and Ramli (2020) that moral evils are properly denounced in the teaching of Islamic education. The findings of this study revealed that the teaching of Islamic education fabricates society through flourishing the social relations in the society and this finding completely supports the findings of Kakakhel (2010), which stresses that moral integrity in interpersonal relations and moral evils are detrimental to social and spiritual growth. The findings of Khan (2016) revealed that the teaching of Islamic education can enable the students to know the real nature of this mundane life which is very short and its pleasures are momentary which also shows that one should not be boastful of one achievement and should not indulge in self-aggrandizement which is the real objective of this research study. As per the statement of this study, the findings of Lapidus

(2014), that society can be purified from the evils of ignorance, injustice, immorality, and social inequalities as was done in the pre-Islamic Arabian society. The study Brown (2011) analyzed that the exemplary life of the Holy Prophet (SAW) took the morally lagged behind society to the pinnacles of morality, this study aimed that despite the advancement of modern education moral degradation prevails in society, which breeds numerous societal ills, and ethical dilemmas and cultural decay has been caused by this very education. As per study findings of the Shah, Ullah and Rehman (2024) which is consonant with the objectives of this study. The study of Haron, Jamil and Ramli(2020) has revealed that the advent of technological advancement has eroded the ethical framework of social norms. This study was focused on the contribution of the role played by the students of Islamic seminaries which the findings of the study proved through the universalization of Madrassa education. The moral dilemma of materialism can be mitigated and such a system of education can improve the social well-being and morality of the society. Finally, this study may have some specific limitations and shortcomings as the respondents were limited and their outlook regarding modern education can be basic to some extent. Moreover, there may be a lack of impartiality and objectivity in the views of the respondents, as some parents cannot discern the factuality of the matter and its real perspectives.

Conclusion

The collaboration of modern education and Islamic teachings provides an attractive lens through which to examine the complexities of moral development and societal values in contemporary societies. While modern education has undoubtedly contributed to intellectual growth and technological advancements, it has also been criticized for its failure to instill ethical values and moral virtues in students. The erosion of traditional moral milieus and the rise of moral relativism in modern societies highlight the emergency-based need for a renewed emphasis on character education, ethical reasoning, and the cultivation of virtues that foster communal wellbeing and social harmony. Similarly, Islamic education which is imported by Madrassa offers not only religious knowledge but also develops the character and ethical manners of the students. The Islamic teachings had a grave impact on character character-building and moral excellence of the Madrassa students revealing the transformative lines of an education system grounded in religious ethics and beliefs. The condemnation of some moral and ethical evils and in promotion of such virtues like empathy, compassion, honesty, social integrity, and social justice are the basic aims of Islamic education to purify society of social and ethical ills and implement the teaching of the Holy Quran and practices of the Holy Prophet (SAW) and the four righteous Caliphs (RA).

Recommendations

- 1. All the schools of professional and general education should be allowed to get training in the Madrassa education system to foster the moral excellence of the students.
- 2. Educationists and stakeholders should examine the role of parents, religious leaders, and the wider Muslim community in supporting social and moral training efforts and fostering a conducive environment for students to learn and practice Islamic values.
- 3. Like other pieces of training for the officers of superior services some training on the moral system of Islam should be provided to the students of the formal education system.
- 4. The government should declare all types of immoralities as cognizable offenses in the light of Islamic injunctions.

Further research study

A study on a quantitative basis is recommended on this very topic

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