Journal of Sustainable Learning and Development
ISSN (Print): 2791-0881 and ISSN (Online): 3079-0565, Volume: 4, No. 2, 2024

Delving into Victorian Childhood in Relation to Mental Health: An Explorative Study

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Abstract: This paper expands the theories included in existing literature regarding parent-child relationships in literature with a focus on *Jane Eyre*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Great Expectations*, *Silas Marner*, and *Wuthering Heights* to inform as well as understand the relationships between the childhood caregiving context and the child as a mentally healthy individual. The qualitative content analysis regarding parenting focuses on the attachment styles of children in the family systems and uses social information processing models and ecological systems theory to make sense of factors that shape maturity. It has emerged that caring parenthood, characterized by strong attachments makes most children bold and healthy in moods and relationships for holistic development. On the contrary, power, abuse, or neglect as parenting stress leads to ambivalent attachments, identity disturbances, and the abuse of interpersonal relationships. Images of such a childhood are generally quite frightening, and people will likely carry the "scars" of their experiences with them for the rest of their lives, but caregiving bonds will allow wounds to heal over time. The objective of the current study is to fully support and justify the claim that practitioners of parenting activities possess a major role in the social and emotional development of a child. Lastly, this paper will benefit parents, caregivers, and researchers by showing how the parenting style of individuals influences their mental well-being and that of society in general. Events such as abuse and neglect by caregivers will be dealt with by several recommendations aimed at eliminating the problems for policymakers too.

Keywords: Psychological Trauma, Parenting, Childhood Experiences, Mental Health, Emotional Development, Victorian Novels, Parent-Child Relationships.

Introduction

Literary works reflect society and offer insights into the development of human relations through the ages. Especially the novels serve as a key to unlocking many such aspects such as the concepts of a particular society, the structure of a family, and its consequences. Fictional literature from the Victorian era of 19th century England seems as an interesting pose for people who wish to examine the issue of parenthood and children's psychological well-being. Nonetheless, there is a scarcity of attempts to understand and analyze those classic works towards providing social and cultural approaches to parenting and its consequences on children, which is what this research seeks to do the most. This study mainly aims to shed light on the responsible and highly protective attitudes a parent-child relationship development should bear against the child's mental health by analyzing the parental portrayals and parent-child

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relationships as depicted in some important Victorian novels. The examination of such Victorian novels and close analysis of some aspects will become useful for scholars studying such narratives and long-term consequences on family institutions and child care which would assist in policy development. Analysis of parenting imagery helps to see how the character depicts a computer in the content analysis of five eminent Victorian novels namely – *Jane Eyre*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Great Expectations*, *Silas Marner*, and *Wuthering Heights.*

This analysis is underpinned by several theoretical approaches such as attachment, parental acceptance-rejection, social information processing, and ecological systems theories. Such theories help in elucidating the reason why different parenting styles and parenting practices affect the child's socioemotional development. This research paper emphasizes strongly the importance of parenthood in shaping the psychological well-being of the child. It focuses on the necessity of positive parenting and offers useful activities in parenting toward children's sound social and emotional development. It is important to appreciate the fact that parenting and its practice influences child development at the most basic level which involves optimization of mental health in the forthcoming generation. This analysis once again confirms that with wise and loving parenting, children grow up with food for thought and shelter, enabling optimal development.

Background of the Study

Wordsworth famously said, "The Child is the Father of the Man," in 1807. This belief that childhood experiences had a significant impact on how the adult mind developed later in life led to the first comprehensive literary analyses of the child's mind in mid-19th-century novels. The books *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* (1847), *Great Expectations* (18461), *Silas Marner* (1861), and *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) were published during this incredibly productive time. Additionally, at this time the first English psychiatric journal was established, the Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology (1848), which included some of the first discussions of neurological illnesses and pediatric insanity. The conventional wisdom up to this time was that youngsters were generally shielded from the emotions and mental illnesses of adults. This perspective began to change in the middle of the 20th century when increased medical interest in juvenile nerve diseases reflected the literary emphasis on the terrifying or miserable aspects of childhood. After this discovery, multifarious forms of research began on this specific topic, allowing multiple areas of interest to shine through and find more information in this regard. Past research has already shown the deep links between how parents act and children's emotional and mental health. Studies have revealed that caring, responsive parenting helps children develop well emotionally, while harsh, rejecting, or neglectful parenting can lead to issues like anxiety, aggression, and antisocial behavior later on (Melquist, 2009; Case & Paxson, 2001). Additionally, psychology theories explain parenting's shaping impact on children's emotional, thinking, and social skills and how early parent-child experiences shape their development paths (Davies, 2014). Culture and the norms of the time also guide parenting attitudes and effects across eras (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

While these earlier studies have extensively explored ties between parenting approaches and child outcomes, there are still chances to increase understanding of meaningful caregiving through the study of cultural works. Looking at cultural stories and meaningful themes around family relationships shown in great novels across historical times offers an in-depth perspective.

Looking closely at the themes and messages in greatly admired novels shows how much influence parents have on their children. The books show this parental impact across different levels of society and generations over history. The insights from these respected books strongly connect to and matter for parents and families today in the modern world. This study aims to address the opening by using an analysis of cultural works to investigate societal perspectives on changing family dynamics and their developmental impacts by focusing on parenting portrayals within classic Victorian novels.

The goal of this literary examination is to highlight parenting's vital role in child development by analyzing iconic Victorian fiction to provide historical and cultural perspectives on caregiving patterns and their emotional implications. Bringing out these contextual insights through literary analysis makes clear the importance of prudence, and healthy parenting for a noble society. It also emphasizes key themes around family dynamics for guiding modern parenting practices, interventions, policies, and research. In the end, this study works to spark discussion and bring greater awareness to the deep parental influences on child wellbeing.

Literature Review

The literature review intends to inspect existing studies on the relevant topics. By analyzing previous research, theories, and cultural narratives, this review aims to explain the parenting-child mental health link. These studies establish background and contexts for investigating portrayals of family relationships and effects in Victorian novels. Melquist, N. (2009) shared research on parenting and its impact on the development and prevention of mental health problems in early childhood. The paper defines children's mental health, identifies risks to their development, and emphasizes the importance of the parent-child relationship. The review suggests that emotional and behavioral problems in early childhood tend to continue into later life, indicating the need for prevention and intervention in the early years. The study concludes with recommendations for activities that can reduce children's mental health risks and build protective factors for children. Othman Mohammed and Alqahtani (2018) shared a study that, delves into the significance of the absent mother theme in Charlotte and Emily Bronte's novels, namely *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*. This concept serves as a powerful tool for the Bronte sisters to address gender, societal, and ideological issues. Influenced by Gothic themes of revolution and authority, both novels explore the impact of the absence of maternal figures on characters. This study suggests that the lack of a mother exposes female characters to male dominance, contributing to the narrative. Despite its narrative implications, the absence of a mother is argued to have a societal benefit by resisting deviant social behavior.

Spurr and Tanja (2019) shared a study that discusses how fathers, Sir Thomas and Mr. Bennet fail in their roles in Jane Austen's novels *Mansfield Park* and *Pride and Prejudice*. It argues that their shortcomings and paternal failures lead to disruptions in the social order and successful marriages for the heroines. Case, A., & Paxson, C. (2001) shared a research paper that discusses the consequences for children growing up when at least one biological parent is absent, including learning problems, behavioral problems, and the likelihood of living in poverty and also explores strategies and possibilities for these effects, including scarring from unhappy home life and social stress. A study shared by Alem (2020), investigated the psychosocial challenges faced by orphaned children in public primary schools. Findings revealed diverse psychological, economic, and social issues affecting their education and overall well-being. Recommendations include the

establishment of support systems by stakeholders, teachers, and caregivers to address the psychosocial needs of orphaned children. Härkönen (2017) shared a study that discusses families and how changes in them can affect kids. The goal is to better understand how different family situations impact children. It discusses the connection between parents splitting up and how it can affect a child's well-being. The article also brings up questions about other changes in families, why things happen, and how it affects kids from different backgrounds. The study by O'Hara et al. (2019) aimed to investigate the relationship between parenting time, parenting quality, inter-parental conflict, and mental health problems in children of high-conflict divorce. The study concluded that higher-quality parenting time was related to better mental health for children.

Elam et al. (2019) investigated the relationship between patterns of post-divorce parenting time, conflict, quality, and children's adjustment. The results showed that children in low-conflict, high-quality parenting had the best adjustment outcomes while those in high-conflict, low-quality profiles had the poorest adjustment outcomes. The study by Semke et al. (2010) explored the impact of parenting stress and motivational beliefs on family involvement for children with disruptive behaviors. The researchers found that parents who experienced higher levels of stress were less involved in their child's education, while those who had stronger beliefs in their ability to positively influence their child's behavior were more involved. The study highlights the importance of addressing parenting stress and beliefs through actions aimed at improving family involvement and the academic and social outcomes of children with disruptive behaviors.

This study by Skinner et al. (2022) discusses the impact of parents, teachers, and peers on student engagement in academics. The study draws on existing research to highlight the positive impacts of parental involvement, teacher support, and peer interactions on student engagement, while also acknowledging the possible negative effects of negative teacher-student relationships and peer victimization. McHale (1996) shared a study that discusses why it's important to study whole families, especially those with two parents, to understand how children develop socially and emotionally. The studies in this book focus on how parents work together and interact with their children. These studies provide a foundation for future research on different family structures. In a study by Gillis and Roskam (2019), they found that when parents feel overwhelmed and burned out, it can negatively affect their relationship with their kids. The research suggests that if we find ways to help parents feel less burnt out and offer them support, it can make their relationship with their children better.

In the article "The Role of Parents in Children's Psychological Development" by Kagan (1999), the author highlights the importance of parental involvement in children's psychological development. The article highlights the role of parents in shaping children's emotional, cognitive, and social development. This study shows that parents who provide a supportive and nurturing environment can positively impact their child's psychological well-being—in a survey by Yeung (2002), explored how family money affects young kids' development using data from 753 children aged 3 to 5. It looked at two money aspects – stability and amount and their connection to academic achievements and behavior issues. Findings showed that a mother's feelings and parenting influenced behavior. The study by Phua (2020) highlights the importance of positive maternal mental health for both mother and child. Studies show that babies who receive love and care from their parents tend to have healthier development and children do well when their

parents not only show affection but also communicate respectfully, listen to them, set consistent rules and expectations, and offer safe opportunities to become more independent.

A study shared by Farooqi (2009) examined the self-esteem of orphaned versus parented children. The research suggests that adopted children and those with high self-esteem often experience better outcomes. Parental support affects children's self-esteem reciprocally, with gender differences noted. Understanding and promoting self-esteem is crucial for children's well-being. A study shared by Ravneet (2018), looked into the behavior and feelings of orphans and vulnerable children in institutional homes. Out of 292 participants, 16.78% showed problems. Things like age, gender, reason for being in the institution, age when they came in, and how long they stayed were linked to these issues. Conduct problems were the most common (34.90%). This study (Davies, 2014) explores how family factors impact child psychopathology from a developmental perspective. It also identifies key risks like conflict and parenting issues. Studies indicate that family traits like aggression and conflict contribute to mental health issues in kids.

This study by Mao, Zang, and Zhang (2020) investigates how parental absence affects development in Chinese left-behind children. Findings reveal a negative link, impacting academics and non-cognitive skills. Other research also delves into absent parents affecting health and diverse family structures. Studies also explore the absence due to migration, death, or divorce affecting education in other countries. The survey explored by Sethi (2015) examines self-esteem, social skills, physical competence, and academic self-concept in orphans and non-orphans. The sample included 325 children, categorized into different groups based on their living arrangements. Results showed a significant relationship between these factors in both groups, with orphans exhibiting higher self-esteem than non-orphans.

Research Gap

While existing research has started delving into the influence of different parenting styles on a child’s mental health, a notable gap in the scholarly work pertains to the scarce exploration of how classic Victorian novels offer valuable insights into historical and cultural perspectives on parenting practices. These novels serve as a rich tapestry of societal norms and values prevalent during the Victorian era, shedding light on various parenting techniques and their ramifications on children's development and overall well-being. By examining the portrayals of parental figures and their interactions with children in works by authors like Charles Dickens and Charlotte Brontë, a deeper understanding can be gleaned regarding the prevalent attitudes towards child-rearing during that period. Expanding on this line of inquiry is crucial in unraveling the complex interplay between literature, history, and psychology, offering a nuanced perspective on how differing parenting approaches shaped the psychological landscape of children in the Victorian era. Through a comprehensive analysis of these literary works, it becomes evident that parenting practices of the past continue to resonate in contemporary society, underscoring the enduring relevance of these timeless narratives in informing current debates surrounding child development and mental health.

Research Questions

After thoroughly analyzing and reviewing the previous literature and depending on the literature gap, the researcher has determined the purpose of the study and the questions that will be answered by the end of the study.

1. How do the portrayals of parenting in these novels demonstrate the connections between early caregiving experiences and later social-emotional adjustment issues?
2. What do the dynamics between parents and kids in these stories reveal about the bigger social views of parenting and child development during this historical time?

Research Objectives

General Objective

To highlight the salient role that parenting plays in influencing a child's mental health.

Specific Objectives

1. To examine the various aspects of parenthood, such as parental involvement, parenting style, and the parent-child relationship, that affect a child's mental health, specifically in terms of anxiety, depression, and behavioral issues.
2. To use the works of classic Victorian novels – *Jane Eyre, Pride and Prejudice, Great Expectations, Silas Marner,* and *Wuthering Heights,* to provide a historical and cultural perspective on parenting and child development.

Methodology

This study utilizes a content analysis technique to examine how various aspects of parenthood are depicted in classic Victorian novels and their potential impacts on children's mental health and development. Content analysis is used to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts within some given qualitative data. This method involves systematically examining vast amounts of written materials such as scholarly works, theories, articles, and journals purposive sampling method is used to select five Victorian novels that provide insight into parenting practices and parent-child relationships during this era. The novels include *Jane Eyre, Pride and Prejudice, Great Expectations, Silas Marner,* and *Wuthering Heights.* The textual data is analyzed guided by key ideas of attachment theory (Bretherton, 1992), parental acceptance-rejection theory (Rohner, 2004), social information processing model (Crick & Dodge, 1994), and ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) outlined in the Theoretical Framework.

Theoretical Framework

Attachment Theory, as delineated by Bretherton in 1992

Attachment theory, as delineated by Bretherton in 1992**,** says that a child's socio-emotional development is significantly shaped by the quality of their early interactions with primary caregivers. This foundational aspect of attachment processes indicates that the nature of the relationship between the child and their caregivers greatly affects the child’s emotional and psychological growth throughout their formative years. When a child experiences inadequate or inconsistent parenting, it elevates the likelihood of developing various mental health issues as they mature. This kind of parenting often leads to insecure or disorganized attachment styles, which can manifest in difficulties in relationships, self-regulation, and overall emotional well-being. In contrast, responsive and nurturing parenting plays a crucial role in establishing a secure attachment, forming a stable base from which the child can explore the world, develop resilience, and nurture healthy interpersonal relationships.

Parental Acceptance-rejection Theory (Rohner, 2004)

Parental acceptance-rejection theory (Rohner, 2004) proposes that parental rejection damages children's self-esteem, emotional regulation, and social functioning, while parental acceptance facilitates psychological adjustment. This theory highlights how pivotal parental acceptance versus rejection is for a child's socioemotional development.

Understanding these dynamics necessitates a careful examination of the diverse approaches to parenting—ranked from neglectful to highly responsive—and their corresponding outcomes on individual children's emotional health and attachment styles. Through such analyses, researchers and practitioners can gain nuanced insights into how different parenting strategies uniquely influence children to become capable, emotionally intelligent individuals. This understanding not only enriches the existing body of knowledge about attachment theory but also informs the development of interventions and support systems aimed at guiding parents in fostering healthier emotional environments for their children. In doing so, it underscores the importance of the caregiver-child relationship in shaping long-term outcomes for mental health and well-being. (Rohner, 2004) proposes that parental rejection damages children's self-esteem, emotional regulation, and social functioning, while parental acceptance facilitates psychological adjustment. This theory highlights how pivotal parental acceptance versus rejection is for a child's socioemotional development.

The Social Information Processing Model, as Proposed by Crick and Dodge in 1994

The social information processing model, as proposed by Crick and Dodge in 1994**,** offers valuable insights into how a child’s ability to establish and maintain relationships with others is fundamentally influenced by their interpretation of social signals and their responses to them. This model underscores the importance of a child's past experiences in shaping their beliefs and behaviors in social contexts. For instance, when children grow up in environments where their parents or caregivers frequently exhibit harsh or unkind behavior, they may start to develop a generalized view that others in the world are similarly unkind. This skewed perception can have a profound impact on their social interactions. If they come to believe that aggression is a normative response, they might begin to adopt tough, confrontational, or aggressive behaviors in their dealings with peers.

As a result, their behavior could alienate potential friends or other children who may feel threatened or pushed away by such aggression. This, in turn, can create a pessimistic cycle: the child may find themselves socially isolated, leading to feelings of loneliness, low self-esteem, or further negative perceptions of others, confirming their initial beliefs that people are indeed unfriendly or hostile. On a broader scale, the model illustrates how vital early social interactions are in determining the trajectory of a child's social development. These experiences lay the groundwork for future relationships and social competencies. If children do not learn positive social cues and responses, they may struggle to connect with their peers and form healthy, lasting friendships, affecting their social and emotional well-being for years to come. In summary, the social information processing model emphasizes the pivotal role of experience in shaping how children interpret social situations and react to the behaviors of others, ultimately affecting their ability to cultivate successful and fulfilling social relationships. This theory shows that bad experiences with parents can deeply affect how children understand and deal with people around them.

Ecological Systems Theory, Introduced by Psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner in 1979

Ecological systems theory, introduced by psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner in 1979, represents a comprehensive framework for understanding the various factors contributing to a child's development. According to this theory, a child's growth and overall development are profoundly influenced by multiple layers of environmental context, each serving as a different ecological system that interacts and impacts the other.

Bronfenbrenner's central principle is that there is an intricate interplay between how parents raise their children and the society in which they exist. The cultural standards and expectations affect parenting styles, while the nurturing and developmental experiences provided at home can equip children to thrive within their societal context. In essence, this theory underscores the significance of a holistic approach to child development, one that appreciates the diverse and interconnected environmental factors that influence a child's growth, helping us understand how children adapt to, interact with, and become a part of the larger world as they mature. Through this multilayered lens, we can gain valuable insight into the complexities of upbringing and the diverse pathways through which children learn, grow, and engage with their communities. These theories create a way to understand how different ways parents raise their children and whether parents are there or not can affect how children feel. This helps us see it from both the relationship side and the social context side.

Analysis of the Novels

The condition of the children in Victorian Novels will be analyzed in terms of contemporary perceptions and ideologies of the people living in this era. The authors in their novels tried to highlight the importance of caregiving to children through depicting their pitiful lives.

Victorian Attitude to Children

As previously stated, the Calvinist worldview of John Wesley, which maintained that children lacked the ability for virtue due of original sin, greatly impacted the Victorian attitude toward children. Rousseau disagreed, arguing that they were fundamentally good and incapable of evil. Additionally, Rousseau supported raising children in accordance with their natural development rather than treating them like miniature adults (Grylls 23–33). The authors like Dickens, Bronte sisters, Jane Austen were more in accord with Rousseau's viewpoint than Wesley's, suggesting that Victorians tended to accept extremes of both points of view. Victorian novels, then, offer important insights into shifting perspectives on the care that parents and guardians should provide for their children. The age saw a distinct movement from Puritanical and Wesleyan views to more Romantic views reflecting those of not only Rousseau, but of Blake and Wordsworth. The Victorians started believing that parenting plays a crucial role in a child's overall development, encompassing various key aspects such as their mental well-being, behaviors, interpersonal connections, and trajectory in life. The quality of parental support, emotional availability, establishment of structure, and the formation of secure attachments substantially influence a child's emotional health. Conversely, when parents exhibit negative behaviors, such as abuse, neglect, and toxic relationship dynamics, it can profoundly impact a child's emotional state in enduring ways.

Portrayal of the children in Victorian Novels

Current research underscores the intricate relationship between diverse parenting factors – such as the extent of parental involvement, the adopted parenting style, and the strength of the parent-child bond – and the emergence or exacerbation of issues like anxiety, depression, and conduct disorders in children. Furthermore, analyzing prominent works of literature from the Victorian era provides valuable insights into the societal and historical perspectives surrounding family dynamics and their profound effects on a child's growth and well-being. By merging these literary observations with psychological theories, we can gain a deeper understanding of how parenting practices can either nurture or impede a child's flourishing. The combined exploration of these disciplines' sheds light on the intricate interplay between parenting strategies, cultural influences, and psychological mechanisms in shaping a child's holistic development.

Within the pages of *Pride and Prejudice*, the emotional distance of Mr. Bennet and the controlling nature of Mrs. Bennet reflect insecure attachment styles, showing how parents can influence their children's attachment patterns, as explained by attachment theory (Bretherton, 1992). Mr. Bennet is portrayed as a witty but somewhat indifferent father. He often withdraws from family affairs, preferring to spend time in his library and escape the chaos of his household. His lack of involvement in the lives of his daughters, especially in guiding them in their choices, can be seen as a form of neglect. On the other hand, Mrs. Bennet is overly preoccupied with finding suitable husbands for her daughters, especially considering the societal norms of the time. Her relentless focus on securing advantageous marriages, particularly for her eldest daughters, Jane and Elizabeth, leads her to make hasty decisions and prioritize wealth and social status over genuine compatibility and happiness. Lydia, the youngest of Bennet's sisters, exhibits behavior that goes against societal norms, including her flirtation with officers and her elopement with Mr. Wickham. The fact that Lydia's behavior is allowed to escalate to such an extent suggests a lack of discipline and guidance on the part of her parents. Also, the Bennet parents do not seem to have a solid financial plan for the future, and Mr. Bennet's estate is entailed away, meaning that it will pass to a distant male relative rather than directly to his daughters. Overall, their insecure attachments lead to a household marked by emotional distance, lack of guidance, and a focus on societal expectations over genuine emotional well-being.

In *Great Expectations*, Pip undergoes a predominant development that might be influenced by the environment in which the character lives. Apart from Joe, the child is not treated warmly at home. His sister and friends who visit them treat him as inferior. The situation of the child in the company of adults who are not his loving parents is described for example in this way:

"They seemed to think the opportunity lost if they failed to point the conversation at me, now and then, and stick the point into me. I might have been an unfortunate little bull in a Spanish area, but I got so smartingly touched up by these moral goals (Great Expectations 22)".

It is evident that the insecurity the child feels and unhappiness caused by his family. Pip's record of his own abuse and neglect is, of course, the most developed argument on behalf of children in the novel. His being "undersized, for my years, and not strong" (2) results from his being literally and metaphorically squeezed out from the table by churchgoers, such as those on Christmas Day (22). Joe spoons extra gravy onto his plate and furtively promises him pork pie like the others, but allows him to be dehumanized as he is called a "little monkey" (7) a

“squeaker” (24), and a “sixpennorth of halfpence” (22). Pip is also goaded like “an unfortunate little bull in a Spanish arena”.

The relationship between Pip and Miss Havisham is no less interesting. When Pip is a small child and meets Miss Havisham for the first time, he is terrified by her and her house. Apart from the terror, he feels abjection, because he is often insulted by Estella according to Miss Havisham´s orders. Estella's difficulty forming secure attachments stems from her upbringing by the reclusive and vengeful Miss Havisham. Miss Havisham raises Estella without love or care, making her emotionally distant and manipulative, leading to an insecure attachment style. Estella's inability to reciprocate genuine affection is evident when she marries the abusive Bentley Drummle, emphasizing the impact of her upbringing. The novel highlights how manipulative parenting can harm emotional bonds and a child's development. Estella, raised by Miss Havisham to break men's hearts, is emotionally detached and struggles with the capacity for genuine affection. Her marriage to Drummle is arguably a consequence of her upbringing, where she was groomed to be emotionally distant and to view relationships as tools for manipulation. Estella's journey illustrates the dangers of caregiving that exploits rather than nurtures a child. We cannot find a child who lives in a functional family in the whole story. Magwitch himself indicates some of his childhood experiences and he advocates his crimes by saying that his position as an orphaned child was extremely difficult: “But what the devil was I to do? I must put something into my stomach, mustn’t´t I?” (293). This part of his speech can be also interpreted as that he thinks his crimes were only a consequence of his living conditions.

In the novel Jane Eyre, *Jane Eyre* goes through a traumatic childhood after her parents die and is sent to live as an unloved orphan with her cruel maternal aunt Mrs. Reed. Jane is constantly abused and punished unfairly by her adoptive family. The day after the incident in the red room, Jane acknowledges that she feels “physically weak and broken down” (20) but largely focuses on what she calls “an unutterable wretchedness of mind: a wretchedness which kept drawing from me silent tears; no sooner had I wiped one salt drop from my cheek than another followed” (20). She links this “unutterable wretchedness of mind” to her “racked nerves” (20), which were “now in such a state that no calm could soothe, and no pleasure excite them agreeably” (20). Here she feels like she is abandoned. Her time at the Lowood School only furthers her anxiety and fragile self-image. Jane grows up deprived of care and affection, leading to intense insecurity and defensiveness. As an adult, Jane continues to struggle with the emotional wounds from her lonely childhood. She grew up feeling inferior and often expected people to reject her. Jane portrays doubts and distrust when Mr. Rochester first declares his intentions to make Jane his wife. Jane's response to such long-awaited love and security illustrates how deep scars from childhood neglect and trauma persist in shaping one's adult relationships. Her distrust of Mr. Rochester also aligns with the social information processing model's (Crick & Dodge, 1994) premise that early experiences warp perceptions and worldviews.

At the beginning of the novel *Silas Marner*, Silas is alone and disconnected from the people in Raveloe because of false accusations and the loss of his gold coins. He becomes avoidant, avoiding emotional closeness with others as a way to protect himself. Silas likely lost one or both parents when he was young, which caused him to be lonely and self-reliant from an early age. The novel also does not mention any siblings, extended family, or close childhood friends for Silas. His apparent lack of early bonds and loner disposition made it difficult for him to

establish connections. However, when he finds Eppie, everything changes. He becomes a devoted and loving father, providing Eppie with stability and care. This consistent and nurturing care helps Eppie form a secure attachment with Silas as her new father. As a result of his bond with Eppie, Silas goes from being avoidant and isolated to having secure relationships. His love for Eppie helps him open up and feel a sense of belonging. He goes from being a hermit to becoming an active member of the village who enjoys being with others and taking care of Eppie. This personal transformation shows how caregiving love, as explained in attachment theory, has the power to heal. Silas's attentive care for Eppie promotes her healthy emotional growth and rescues him from a life of isolation. Eppie's secure attachment to Silas highlights how dependable care promotes emotional well-being, as parental acceptance-rejection theory (Rohner, 2004) also suggests.

In *Wuthering Heights* Heathcliff and Hareton, both go through tough times due to terrible parenting. Their struggles highlight ecological systems theory's (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) view that broader cultural factors shape parenting practices and child outcomes. Heathcliff is an orphan taken in by Mr. Earnshaw, but the family never truly accepts him. They treat him like an outsider and call him a "gypsy." The majority of those in the household continue to view Heathcliff as a “dirty, ragged, black-haired child” (36). Mrs. Earnshaw, Hindley Earnshaw, and neighbors constantly speak of him in disgracing terms as well, such as “gypsy brat” (37), “dog,” “imp of Satan” (39), and a “naughty, swearing boy” (55). After Mr. Earnshaw dies, Hindley, who is jealous of Heathcliff's relationship with Catherine, mistreats and abuses him. This mistreatment changes Heathcliff, leading to his later cruelty and violence. His situation worsens when Hindley obtains authority over the home following the death of Mr. Earnshaw. Hindley, who always bullied and rivaled Heathcliff while growing up (Morris 162), uses this new power to his advantage. He removes Heathcliff from school and forces him to work hours of hard labor, often Blosenski 11 punishing him with severe thrashings. Hindley’s anger and rough attitude towards everybody increases after the death of his wife, and his temper and drunken states often lead to brutal clashes with those around him. Hindley’s strict and cruel hand treats Heathcliff like a servant rather than a family member. These acts of violence leave Heathcliff’s homelife dangerous and unpredictable. Hareton on the other hand loses his mother early on and is raised by Heathcliff after Hindley's death. Heathcliff intentionally prevents Hareton from getting an education, keeping him ignorant and unable to read or write as a form of punishment for being part of the Earnshaw family. Hareton is left all alone without love or guidance. Both Heathcliff and Hareton grow up without the care and close relationships that are important for normal development. This lack of care and attention makes them act aggressively and avoid socializing. However, Heathcliff eventually forms a close bond with Hareton before he dies, showing that there is still a human need for connection. The novel shows how a difficult and unstable upbringing can seriously harm mental health.

Further Discussions

This research is meticulously designed with the primary goal of elucidating the crucial significance of parenting practices in the intricate process of molding and influencing children's mental well-being. By employing a comprehensive qualitative analysis of the portrayal of parenting dynamics and the nuances of parent-child relationships within the context of classic Victorian literature, the study offers a captivating exploration of parental roles and interactions, shedding light on how these elements have evolved over time and across different cultural

landscapes. Moreover, by delving deep into the themes and depictions found in the Victorian novels, the research unveils a rich cultural and historical backdrop that underscores the profound impact of parental engagement, varied styles of parenting, and the quality of parent-child bonds on the intricate tapestry of children's socioemotional development. Through this in-depth examination, the research seeks to enhance our understanding of the enduring influence that parenting practices have on shaping the cognitive and emotional landscapes of future generations, thereby contributing valuable insights to the broader discourse on child psychology and developmental psychology within a cultural and historical context.

Key findings reveal that positive, nurturing parenting marked by emotional support, structure, and secure attachment is strongly associated with healthy development in children. Characters like Elizabeth Bennet and Jane Eyre exemplify how consistent, empathetic care in childhood aids in building self-esteem, managing emotions, forming relationships, and tackling hardships. In contrast, negative parenting is linked to issues like insecure bonds, low self-worth, and aggression, as evidenced by characters like Heathcliff. The literary analysis enriches our understanding of how good-enough caregiving provides a foundation for normal maturation, while traumatic early experiences leave scars. However, the research also indicates possibilities for healing and change through caregiving bonds later in life, as Silas Marner's story illustrates.

These literary insights translate powerfully to present-day circumstances and can guide parents, caregivers, researchers, and policymakers. Understanding the profound impact of parenting on child development is essential for promoting mental health and well-being in the next generation. This analysis reinforces that wise, nurturing parenting provides sustenance and shelter, allowing children to blossom.

Conclusion

In conclusion, by examining the ramifications of parenting on a child's psychological well-being within the context of Victorian literary works, this study underscores a crucial call for an enhanced understanding of the significance of compassionate parental guidance. The portrayals in these narratives vividly illustrate how the bonds between parents and their children can either instill resilience or lead to fragility in the face of life's challenges. Delving into the analysis of these literary masterpieces not only imparts invaluable lessons on the intricacies of various parenting approaches but also underscores the profound impact that a nurturing and supportive parental environment can have on a child's overall development. Indeed, the core ethos of effective parenting should revolve around creating a secure and enriching atmosphere that empowers young individuals to realize their full potential. Embracing this vision has the potential to serve as a guiding beacon, illuminating the path for parents, communities, and nations alike as they strive to cultivate the mental and emotional well-being of future generations, thereby fostering a more resilient and flourishing society.

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