

Between Physical or Psychological Suffering: The Importance of Achieving Higher Social Standards in Dickens *Our Mutual Friend*

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Abstract

The industrialization of England during the Victorian era had an impact not only on society's structures but also on people's moral ideals. Charles Dickens sought to demonstrate that the power of the surroundings outweighed the power of people and that certain values and standards were more essential than a human being. This study illustrates how people in Charles Dickens' novel *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-65) are caught between society's immoral and corrupt values and moral standards that lead to death or imprisonment. By placing Philip Collins's Dickens and Crime as a framework, this study demonstrates how individuals and society are intertwined, as well as how traditional ideals can lead to people's incrimination. The presentation of parallel worlds in the characters' striving to gain societal acceptance produces an ill environment which rejects who does not submit to its rules. The study attempts to demonstrate that morality and criminality are frequently controlled by societal principles and people's needs, resulting in various types of suffering by presenting different plots of good and evil and different backgrounds of characters.

Keywords: Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, Victorian era, Crime, morality.

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1. Introduction

During the nineteenth century, England changed dramatically as a result of the Industrial Revolution, which marked a turning point in society. The transition from agriculture to mechanization had ramifications in all aspects of life. The new economic and industrial developments altered society and living conditions, which had not only affected the poor, but also the upper classes, where it was a prosperous time for some, it was a time of misery for others. According to the changes in Victorian society, crimes had been permeated and were not only limited to violent actions against the law that deserved punishment; social crimes drew public attention and were components of criminal behavior. The upper and middle classes were willing to commit moral and illegal offenses in order to adapt to the new environment and its principles, whereas the unprivileged, represented by the poor and working-class were deprived of their rights and dehumanized by societal living conditions. Charles Dickens, a representative of his age and an eyewitness to the changes during the nineteenth century is known for portraying the social problems of his time. Dickens, as a crime writer, views the world of crime, its causes and consequences during the early Victorian era, and depicts criminals from various backgrounds. In *Oliver Twist*, *Hard Times*, *Great Expectations* and *Our Mutual Friend*, Dickens depicts the misery of life in the early decades of the Victorian period. He depicted reality in his writing and commented on the defects of society, giving the readers the opportunity to explore problems and find solutions. He showed the cruel impacts on poor people and how poverty forced them into crime. Furthermore, Dickens depicted the upper classes as being involved in the world of crime, contradictory to popular belief.

In '*Our Mutual Friend*' (1864-65), Dickens's last completed novel, he shows how individuals in a capitalist society deny themselves to achieve high standards of society. Dickens depicts how people stand between immoral corrupt values of society and moral principles that lead to death or prison. The presentation of parallel worlds in their striving to gain societal acceptance produces an ill environment which rejects who does not submit to its rules. He shows the mutual relations between individuals and society and how traditional values could lead to incriminating people. Dickens attempts to paint a comprehensive image of the world of crime, as well as demonstrating the reasons for criminal behavior. By presenting the narrative of '*Our Mutual Friend*', Dickens attempts to demonstrate the mutual effect of the lower and upper classes, and how both the rich and poor commit crimes for self-interests. These struggles in a society that is controlled by a corrupted legislative system force people to commit immoral and criminal behaviour.

2. Literature review

Dickens, as a crime writer, assumed that he could dive deep into the dark side of the underworld of Victorian society to portray its problems and suggest solutions for reform. Being part of Victorian society, Dickens suffered the ills of such a corrupt environment and felt the responsibility of drawing attention to the need for

social reform. While most of the writers such as J. Hillis Miller and Lyn Pykett discussed Dickens as a novelist and social reformer, others tried to show him as a crime writer. Dickens and Crime, by Philip Collins (1964), delves into Dickens' vivid genius, thoughts, and his writings about crime. The book revalues Dickens' novels based on the chronological progression of the criminal data derived from the characters. In *Oliver Twist*, the portrayal of criminals so far indicates that there are severe conditions of life that force them to be criminals such as poverty; on the other hand, it is the choice of some people to join the underworld of criminals. Lyn Pykett (2002) states that "Oliver's experiences are designed to demonstrate how the law (and especially the New Poor Law) and a class-bound judiciary on the one hand, and hunger, need and social exclusion on the other, conspire to create criminals" (p.48).

Furthermore, Dickens' reflections on various issues such as class differences, education, and social justice in *Hard Times* were influenced by Thomas Carlyle's social commentary. In *Hard Times*, Leavis states that Dickens, "is for once possessed by a comprehensive vision, one in which the inhumanities of Victorian civilization are seen as fostered and sanctioned by a hard philosophy: the aggressive formulation of an inhumane spirit" (1954, p.274). Alzouabi (2021) highlighted the criminality issue by the analysis of *Hard Times* which "makes it clear that the deformed law, corrupted socio-economic system, strict educational system, and immoral relationships have been factors in creating criminals in the Victorian era" (p.199).

Mccarthy illustrates that "Dickens may state that man's environment determines his character, but it is evident that his characters have 'given' moral natures which are only affected temporarily by their surroundings, if they are affected at all" (1971, p.2). Dickens wanted to demonstrate that the power of the surrounding was more dominating than the power of individuals where certain values and conventions were more important than a human being. Commenting on *Great Expectations*, Van Ghent pointed out that: "[t]wo kinds of crime from Dickens' two chief themes, the crime of parents against a child, and the calculated social crime" (1953, p.165).

Dyson summarized Dickens's performance in the world of literature, "The extraordinary achievement of Dickens was to go as far as he did toward social realism in the early Victorian climate without becoming feverish, and without giving widespread offense. It was his remarkable and unusual gift to be able to depict the most warped and criminal people in a manner horrifyingly vivid to sensitive adult, but unlikely to harm a young person, or a reader only partly engaged with book" (1968, p.14). In *Our Mutual Friend*, he exemplifies a society rife with discontent and populated by disgruntled citizens, several static and completely harmless, while many are aggressive and violent; "Our Mutual Friend reflects scenes of physical and psychological suffering, of social restlessness and dissatisfaction, and of a teeming, yet withered, city plagued by dry winds, dust and detritus" (David, 1981, p.85). Dickens depicts crime in society and demonstrates direct and indirect causes of crime based on societal principles, rules, and laws. Furthermore, this study demonstrates that when certain characters violate society's established norms, they are treated as criminals and punished. This study demonstrates that Dickens, as a crime writer, believed he could delve deep into the dark side of Victorian society's underworld to portray its problems and suggest reforms.

3. Results and Discussion

The mid of the 19th century, characterized by the rapid speed of the industrial revolution, was a period of prosperity for Victorian England in which class division was accompanied by a rapid rise of the middle class. The incidents of the novel took place during the 1850s and 1860s a time that witnessed the rise of the nouveaux-rich which was preoccupied with accumulating wealth regardless of law, morals and social conventions, and turned a blind eye to the grievous changes in society around it. Dickens's vision disclosed not only the materialistic interests of his time but also the monetary consequences and the degradation of the morals of individuals. The financial opportunities of the Industrial Revolution paved the way for the educated, skilled and experienced middle-class people to compete for wealth and privileges with the upper classes. Struggling against the increasing power of the new middle class, corruption pervaded wide sectors of society. On the other hand, labourers of the lower class were squashed by the impact of such a capitalistic environment. Dickens portrayed the condition of England to show the bad consequences on people of different classes, "[t]he kindness, goodwill, trust and communalism that existed during the pre-industrial era, was replaced by "enmity, suspicion and distrust" between masters and workers" (as cited in Hudson, 1992, p.10).

With his fair knowledge and well-acquainted observation, Dickens concentrated on the connection between the material gains and immorality in the new society that accompanied the rise of the Industrial Revolution. Therefore, Dickens visualizes the real world using a sense of humor and satire to reflect the criminals' world in Victorian society. He exposes the influences of the industrial changes on society which separate classes in their pursuit of money and power. The disadvantaged members were subjected to exploitation and prejudice; they were deprived of the basic rights of food, shelter and education. Society criminalized the poor through unequal opportunities and discrimination in the legislative system. Dickens wanted to show that the upper classes could not be detached from the consequences of poverty. He emphasized that inequality leads to insecurity across all social classes.

Dickens showed through his works the connection between wealth and poverty which leads to the world of crime and immorality. According to Carlyle (1941), a corrupt society, such as the Victorian, led by Mammonism, evidently would end in poverty, wretchedness, corruption, and inequality. In their struggle to survive, poor people are forced to commit different immoral and illegal deeds. However, in *Our Mutual Friend*, Dickens shows how the pursuit of wealth and social mobility among classes can be achieved at any cost even among the upper classes that are afraid of the rise of the middle classes. So, Mammonism was related to all classes in their struggle to gain wealth and power. Eventually, this struggle led the upper classes to prey on the weak and poor ones. Dickens tries to show that members of society, regardless of their classes, are motivated by different motifs to achieve their purposes even though they are against law. "*Our Mutual Friend* (1865) is a representation of the fragmented human bodies which are used as metaphors for divided human relationships, families and societies, which further parallel the extremely dehumanized and acquisitive Victorian society" (as cited in Makati, 2008, p.15).

The novel was published serially in 1864-1865 and in a book form in 1865. Some reviewers consider its plot not well laid out; a poor one which revolves around a main plot and subplots. To stress his depiction of the social vision of Victorian society, Dickens exaggerates by presenting too many characters which makes the novel events implausible. Compared with his earlier works, it has been Dickens's darkest work which contains numerous characters and a complex plot. The novel revolves around the social upheaval which turns classes' concerns into a material transaction and aggravates poverty in poor classes. It describes the world of crime with its varied kinds; real crimes and moral ones which I will deal with after I give a summary of the plot. Reed (1992) points out, "In *Our Mutual Friend*'s complicated story of deception and revelation, of creatures rising out of the depths to be transformed or returned to them, one of the most powerful agents in the development of the plot is the nature and manner of enacting punishment" (p.128).

The story begins on a grim evening in London. Two characters from the crushed poor class are introduced: Jesse "Gaffer" Hexam and his daughter Lizzie. Hexam used to live on retrieving corpses from the river and stealing money that he finds, on the excuse that corpses are not in need of money anymore. He disputes with his daughter that what they do is not considered a crime. Meanwhile, news about the death of John Harmon, the son of a man who has made his fortune by working in a dust-heap, is spread. Harmon is killed in a mysterious way after returning from abroad to claim his inheritance. However, his father's will has an unusual condition; Harmon should marry a girl, Bella Wilfer, whom his father has decided for him, if he refuses, the inheritance will be returned to a servant called, Nicodemus (Noddy) Boffin. Hexam found a corpse which was mistakenly thought to be Harmon's because Harmon's identity papers have been found in its pockets. Furthermore, a mysterious man with the name of Julius Handford says that the body does not belong to the man he seeks and disappears. Consequently, the whole inheritance goes to the servant Mr Boffin, who takes Bella to live in his estate as an heiress. John Rokesmith is introduced as the Boffin's secretary whom the narrator alludes to be Julius Handford himself. Gaffer Hexam, who has found the body, is accused of the murder by Rouge Riderhood as a kind of revenge for ending their partnership.

Under such severe conditions, Lizzie asks her brother Charley to pursue his education despite his father's refusal. Meanwhile, Boffin hires Silas Wegg, a one-legged seller, to read for him for he is illiterate. Wegg takes advantage of Boffin and tries to exploit his kindness. During the rising events, another side of society is presented. Alfred Lamble and Sophronia Akershem become engaged on a feigned pretence that they are both rich, misled by the Veneerings family so they decide to take revenge. They try to trap Miss Ponsnap Georgina into believing that a young man called Mr Fledgeby is attracted to her. The conspiracy is settled to gain Georgina's fortune. Fortunately, later we are informed that Mrs Lamble sacrifices her reputation to save her. Hexam, who has been cast off because of the alleged accusation of murdering Harmon is found drowned. Eugene Wrayburn accompanied by Mortimer Lightwood; both are lawyers from the upper class, visit Lizzie to inform her about her father's death and Wrayburn falls in love with Lizzie. Unfortunately, he gets a rival when her brother Charley comes back with his schoolmaster Bradley Headstone. When Lizzie refuses the offer of her brother to be taught by Headstone, and accepts Wrayburn's teacher to educate her, Headstone gets enraged by her refusal and Wrayburn's underestimation, so, he decides to take revenge. Meantime, he is engaged in a plan with Riderhood to take revenge against Wrayburn out of jealousy and humiliation he has caused him, so he attacks Wrayburn at the river and leaves him to die. Wrayburn is rescued by Lizzie, and eventually, they get married. Knowing about Headstone's crime and how he tried to blame Riderhood, Riderhood blackmails him which ends in a fight in which both of them are drowned. Silas Wegg finds another will that reverts the inheritance to the Crown. Wegg starts to blackmail Boffin who in the end throws him out. Finally, it is revealed that both John Rokesmith and Julius Handford are John Harmon. Harmon wants to hide his identity to make sure that Bella will love him, but not his inheritance. So, to do that, he plans with another sailor called George Radford to help him. Unfortunately, Radford conspires with Riderhood to steal Harmon, Riderhood, in turn, tries to take advantage of all. He drugs and drowns both of them, but Harmon survives.

Reed (1992) indicates that "there are many characters in *Our Mutual Friend* who want to punish, but they

are a strange assembly and their views of what is wrong or wicked are tainted in one degree or another by self-interest" (p.120). Jesse "Gaffer" Hexam, who belongs to the poor class, is forced to live on what he gets out of corpses that he finds on the river. He finds in robbing corpses a source of living and brings his daughter Lizzie to help him, depriving her of living an honourable life. Dickens, by narrating the story of Gaffer, stresses that "Gaffer's greed knows no moral limits", and behind his words "lies an astutely satiric social comment, for Gaffer's livelihood comes from death" (McDaniel, 1986, p.11). When Lizzie shows her fear of doing such a job, he comments that "[a]s if it wasn't your living! As if it wasn't meat and drink to you!" (Dickens, 2009, p.13). The waterman, Hexam, has two children who are raised in ill values that what he does is not considered a crime, for the dead body does not need money. Moreover, he gives himself the right to rob them justifying that he has done that for years, "[h]as a dead man any use for money? Is it possible for a dead man to have money? What world does a dead man belong to? 'Tother world. What world does money belong to? This world" (Dickens, 2009, p.16). Under the changing capitalistic economic characteristic of society and moralistic values, Emsley (2018) demonstrates that "criminality, in the form of thefts committed by men from the poorer sections of the working class, was transitory behaviour, possibly fostered by economic hardship, probably encouraged by opportunity" (p.183).

Society, that deprives Hexam of his rights to a respectable life and turns him into living in the underworld of crime, also has its effects that are reflected on Hexam's children. Lizzie is forced to work with her father against her will, where Dickens describes her facial expressions which reveal her detest of such a deed, "[b]ut, in the intensity of her look there was a touch of dread or horror" ((Dickens, 2009, p.9). What Hexam causes to his children is humiliation in a society that treats people according to appearances. Lizzie is described as a "horrid female waterman" who will never be "graceful" in the eyes of society (p.1724). Lizzie, on the other hand, could not abandon her father to pursue her life alone, because Hexam is really gentle with his daughter and satisfied with the scanty comforts provided by his vicious commerce. Regretfully, because of her father's work in robbery, has affected her reputation especially when he is accused of killing John Harmon. Hexam exploits his children for his self-interest. D. David (1981) stresses that in *Our Mutual Friend* "children are a marketable commodity" (p.90).

Dickens portrays children as the outcome of their environment by exposing different examples in the novel. In the Victorian time, poor people refused to teach their children out of poverty and inefficient education that was allowed for the low classes. Dickens portrays children as the outcome of their environment by exposing different examples in the novel. In the Victorian time, poor people refused to teach their children out of poverty and inefficient education that was allowed for the low classes. Therefore, Hexam deprives his children of education believing that "education [is] not needed" (Altick, 1974, p. 249). Not only does their father criminalize them but also society does. They believe that work "earned them money while school earned them nothing" (p.250).

Charley is almost rescued from the misery because of his sister's sacrifice; "his father's harshness has, to some degree, been alleviated by his sister's tender affection" (David, 1981, p.65). He wants to depart from his life at the river and away from his father's control for he harms him a lot. Charley's obsession with class transcendence to escape poverty and gain a place among the upper class explains his aggressiveness. So, as a result of Hexam's treatment of his children, Dickens presents a social crime that reflects its consequences on children. Charley, in the end, "has lost the love of his sister and he is exiled from the warm circle of bourgeois domesticity" (p.66). Dickens presents different characters that have suffered from prejudice both from family and surroundings which criminalize them. Eugene Wrayburn is a lawyer, a gentleman by birth, a victim of his parent who has arranged his whole life without paying any attention to his choices or motifs. His father deprives him of his right of planning the life he wants as he does with his brother. Wrayburn's father "having always in the clearest manner provided (as he calls it) for his children by pre-arranging from the hour of the birth of each, and sometimes from an earlier period, what the devoted little victim's calling and course in life should be" (Dickens, 2009, p.309). So, the consequences of such a decision on Wrayburn's life have been drastic, he says: "I hate my profession...It was forced upon me...[a]nd I...have had no business at all, and never shall have any. And if I had, I shouldn't know how to do it" (p.45). Dickens portrays through different kinds of classes that the surrounding environment has the upper hand in affecting people's way of living, and could successfully prove that committing moral or social crimes is not restricted to a certain class. Emsley (2018) states, "Environment had an inter-relationship with crime, but not simply along the lines that the urban-rural division might suggest" (p.137), which assures that crime is not exclusive to one class, but it varies according to certain concepts and values.

Dickens in narrating the crime of Bradley Headstone against Wrayburn manages to intricate two conflicting worlds and presents the social motifs behind the crime. Headstone has been raised in poverty and learned in the new schools that depend on utilitarian philosophy. His upbringing, which has been based on societal principles, turns him into a repressed criminal veneered by mechanical educational appearances. He struggles to be among the upper classes by seeking to acquire knowledge, to which he tries to prove his supremacy over people around

him to gain a social position. D. David points out that "in his description of the forces which bring Bradley Headstone to ruin, Dickens conjoins sexual jealousy and class resentment" (1981, p.77). When he is encountered by Wrayburn's derision, he heeds his revenge against Wrayburn directly and society indirectly. Headstone dislikes Wrayburn for providing a teacher for Lizzie who has refused Headstone's assistance in educating her. Lizzie by refusing his offer unmasks his suppressed impressions and rouses his wrath against Wrayburn who represents his exasperation against society. He has been raised with wrong values which create a bleak personality breeding on the humiliation and insults that society projects towards less fortunate classes. Both of them, Headstone and Wrayburn, infused by the environmental values, try to underestimate each other. When they meet, Wrayburn uses his class superiority and arrogance against the working classes to disturb Headstone. He says, "I goad the schoolmaster to madness. I make the schoolmaster so ridiculous... Having made sure of his watching me, I tempt him on, all over London... turn suddenly, and catch him before he can retreat. Then we face one another, and I pass him as unaware of his existence, and he undergoes grinding torments" (Dickens, 2009, p.1147). David states that "Bradley becomes the hunted, not the hunter" (1981, p.79). So, Headstone "becomes depraved and murderous because he is unable to ground his passion because of his mechanical upbringing" (Stubbs, 2015, p.33).

Dickens shows that Headstone turns into a criminal by the influence of the surrounding forces, "[t]he state of the man was murderous, and he knew it" (Dickens, 2009, p.1153). As a result, he attacks Wrayburn at the river and leaves him to die; however, by chance, Lizzie manages to rescue him. John (2003) states that "the competitiveness between Wrayburn and Headstone is, to an extent, the dramatic expression of the logic of capitalism" (p.193). So, Headstone's crime is the result of mutilated values of society imposed on all classes which turn people into criminals in order to achieve their goals. Even in such a romantic affair, Headstone should not consider himself as a rival to Wrayburn, for under social principles, he is lesser than Wrayburn on the social scale. "A Riddle without an Answer", the title of a chapter in which Dickens supports his view about the influence of society on Headstone's mental state where he pretends superiority over others to obtain acceptance. What Headstone goes through by being a school teacher to gain social acceptance and the refusal he has confronted by the same society, manages to create a conflicted personality that will impose its existence even through criminal deeds. This proves that society is the opposing power to good virtues with its ill concepts.

The chapter entitled "Voice of Society" indicates that the power of society affects most of the characters in the novel. As a result of the economic changes, poverty and corruption become an identity of the Victorian society in which people of various classes struggle to accumulate money, no matter how aggressively or criminally they try to reach their goals. Roger "Rogue" Riderhood is described as a degenerated moral character, "blackmailer, and murderer, a producer rather than a finder of corpses" (Toker, 2006, p.48). Dickens keenly tries to show the relationship between the capitalistic society and the degradation of morals where money is a key factor in people's incorporation into the world of crime. Greed, deception, revenge and blackmail are found in the world of the novel as pervaded crimes which deserve punishment in the end. Riderhood is a "villain" who is introduced from the very beginning as a robber when he is accused of robbery by Hexam: he defends himself that robbing the living is the same as robbing the corpses. Hexam refuses to continue his partnership with him, "Since you was accused of robbing a man. Accused of robbing a live man!" (Dickens, 2009, p.15). The society in which he lives implants inside him the desire for money and the illusive fallacies around wealth and gentility. When it has been announced about the reward for any information about Harmon's death, he accuses Hexam of the crime without true evidence as a kind of revenge to avoid the real accusation against himself. He has been involved in stealing from Harmon and a shipmate, George Radfoot, that ends by killing the latter and Harmon by chance manages to survive. Emsley (2018) explains that, in the Victorian society, "[p]ersonal feuds between members of the same social class, revenge, and elements of social protest can be detected among the motives" (p.121). Riderhood's selfishness and self-interest are represented in his passionless treatment and scorn of his daughter, Pleasant, who discharges his responsibility to her. Like other characters in the novel, even of the upper class such as Mr John Podsnap, who "[n]ot only does society wrongly respect him because of his wealth, but his wealth is the single most important reason why he holds himself in such high esteem" (McDaniel, 1986, p.13), Riderhood is also guided by the ill principles of society and illegal legislative system.

When Ridehood finds that Headstone tries to implicate him in the murder of Wrayburn, Riderhood blackmails him: "[a]nd as you laid your plots agin me and was a sly devil agin me, I'll be paid for it--I'll be paid for it--I'll be paid for it--till I've drained you dry!" (Dickens, 2009, p.1688-89). As a result of their criminal deeds, both are drowned during a fight beside the river, "the two were found, lying under the ooze and scum behind one of the rotting gates" (p.1696). A society that denies and scorns the poor as a result of the changing principles, implicates them in violent, criminal and even immoral behaviours to gain respectability in society. Dickens portrays the effects of society on morals also by presenting characters of various backgrounds that are ready to commit illegal and immoral crimes to obtain a position in the upper classes. Silas Wegg, Fascination Fledgeby, Mr and Mrs Lamble all of them try to exploit whoever comes in their way even if it is at the expense of other's lives. Wegg, who is introduced as a ballad-seller and life parasite, is victimized by his society because

of his poverty and handicap to live as an unrespectable man. So, when he has the opportunity, he uses his cunning in exploiting the simplicity of Mr Boffin and blackmails him when he finds another version of Harmon's will. Reed (1992) states that Wegg is "worn down by greed and distrust" (p.123) and driven by a dream of a better life, becomes a criminal who in the end deserves punishment; "Wegg returns to mud and filth because it is what he is composed of to begin with" (p.124). Similarly, Fledgeby is a corrupt, hypocrite and deceitful character. He runs a money-lending business and exploits his clients while pretending to be an employee. He hires Riah as a cover manager for his work so that he will not be blamed when someone loses his property for not repaying his debts. Dickens describes him as "the meanest cur existing" (2009, p.565) who schemes with the Lammlers to exploit Miss Georgiana Podsnap, an upper-class girl who is considered an opportunity to him. Fledgeby manages to work within the law domain which gives him the power to exploit people apparently, besides asserting the corruption of the legislative system. David (1981) points out that "Fledgeby is clearly as villainous as Silas Wegg, and maybe more so because he deliberately, and even rationally, sets out to deceive, whereas Wegg is a victim of his own social paranoia" (p.103).

Dickens creates a world which resembles reality in the nineteenth century where money and wealth are the main constituents of society. Presenting various conflicting classes shows that not only the poor, but also the upper classes have been criminalized by distorted values and concepts. Emsley (2018) explains that "it was recognised that men of wealth and social standing also committed offences. Throughout the nineteenth century there was concern about various forms of white-collar crime and corruption" (p.57). Dickens portrays different backgrounds of his characters proving that morality and criminality are most often controlled by society's principles and people's needs. Although Dickens presents different plots of good and evil to deliver moral lessons, his main concern is to reflect the influence of society on people's lives. What makes the novel distinctive from the previous ones as *Oliver Twist* is that it portrays the lives of corrupt upper classes and shows how criminality is not only against law, but also morals. It shows that criminality is not the output of the poor classes as Hexam, providing that with various examples of criminals from the upper ones. Evidently, the events of the novel prove that it is the environment that dictates the kind of crime and how corruption generates criminals.

4. Conclusion

Dickens's progression in his career from *Oliver Twist* in 1837 to his last completed novel *Our Mutual Friend* 1865 has been during the Victorian period when the Industrial Revolution has taken place. His writing portrays Victorian society with its flaws and defects. As a crime writer, he presents crimes in his works to alert his readers to the conflicting world around them. The consequences of society's ills are reflected in people's lives by turning them into criminals whether to survive or achieve society's standards. So, the wide gap between classes, moral and legal corruption, and materialistic relationships are the reasons behind criminalizing people in their attempt to gain social position and acceptance. By examining the last completed novel by Dickens, elements of the crime are displayed in a world that exemplifies Victorian society. The analysis of *Our Mutual Friend* demonstrates the mutual effect of the lower and upper classes, and how both the rich and poor commit crimes for self-interests. These struggles in a society that is controlled by a corrupted legislative system force people to commit immoral and criminal behaviour. Wealth and social classes differentiate between who will be a victim and who will be a criminal. Families and societal relationships play a crucial part in criminalizing people. Poverty and class division affect the conditions of living which force them into crime. The research aimed to shed new light on our mutual friend, where Dickens describes various circumstances from various backgrounds in this novel to demonstrate how an unfavorable environment influences people who are motivated by a need or a desire to achieve higher social standards to become involved in the world of crime.

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Figure 1. The Trend of Economic Development

Description for the above figure.