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The Impact of Early Parental Loss on Adolescent Intimate Relationships: A Case Study of Davi's 'Impulsive Closeness' Towards Men in Never Have I Ever

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Abstract: This paper studies the effect of early loss of a parent on adolescents' intimate relationships, and in particular, the character Davi Vishwakumar from the series *Never Have I Ever*. After Davi's father dies abrubtly, she suffers from emotional difficulties to the point of unresolved grief, which is manifest in her working of male figures, such as Ben and Paxton. During her impulsive closeness, she tends to want immediate emotional bonds as a mechanism to deal with her internal distress. Through the use of attachment theory and general emotional development during adolescence, this analysis examines how Davi's unhappy experiences of being raised influenced how she approaches relationships by maintaining them, which stress emotional fulfillment instead of stability. The paper additionally discusses the impact of her cultural backdrop and family dynamics on her behaviors and relational proclivities. For the most part, this research shows how early loss can detrimentally impact adolescent identity and emotional regulation, and that this can only be overcome through healthier coping mechanisms when forming close relationships

Keywords: early parental loss, adolescent intimate relationships, *Never Have I Ever*

1. Introduction

This study investigates the effect of early loss of parents on adolescents' intimate relationships, particularly with the character Davi Vishwakumar from *Never Have I Ever*. After Davi's father dies abruptly, she suffers from emotional difficulties to the point of unresolved grief, manifest in her working with male figures, such as Ben and Paxton. During her impulsive closeness, she tends to want immediate emotional bonds as a mechanism to deal with her internal distress. Using attachment theory and emotional development during adolescence, this analysis examines how Davi's unhappy experiences influenced how she approaches relationships by maintaining those that stress emotional fulfillment instead of stability. The paper also discusses the impact of her cultural backdrop and family dynamic upon her behaviors and relational proclivities. This research shows how early loss can detrimentally impact adolescent identity and emotional regulation, and that this can be overcome through healthier coping mechanisms.

The episodic style in *Never Have I Ever*, in which short segments integrate humor with emotional development and characterization, is essential in making the series binge-watchable. Fast-paced yet engaging storylines full of cliffhangers have an efficient effect in making audiences keep watching

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while following the development of interpersonal problems and emotional trajectories in subsequent seasons. This engagement not only leads to continued consumption but also reflection upon life's complicated reality in which romantic love is not only necessary to win someone over but also essential in handling friendships.

The paper, through literature review and case analysis, examines Davi's interpersonal life, especially in her relationship with males, to clarify how these relationships symbolize childhood trauma affecting emotional development during teenage life and attachment patterns later. Through analyzing the role of trauma and mourning in her search for closeness, this paper aims to determine to what degree emotional distress is portrayed and indicate psychological outcomes of trauma in influencing interpersonal.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Attachment Theory and Parental Loss

Attachment Theory states that a child's emotional growth and sense of security depend on early bonds with caregivers. These attachments create internal relationship models that shape behavior and emotional responses throughout life. When a parent dies, this critical attachment is disrupted, leading to emotional insecurity and ineffective coping mechanisms.

Research shows that losing a primary caregiver, especially a father, can result in disorganized attachment styles marked by confusion, emotional volatility, and difficulties in forming healthy relationships. The Effect of Positive Parenting on Adolescent Life Satisfaction highlights the father-child bond's role in adolescent well-being [1]. Losing a father leaves an emotional void, increasing fear of rejection and dependence on external validation. Davi's relationship with Paxton reflects this—her need for affirmation becomes a coping mechanism for grief, seen in her fabrications to gain Paxton's attention and distancing from friends.

Furthermore, The Implications of Childhood Parental Loss on Attachment Within Adult Romantic Relationships suggests that early parental loss raises the likelihood of anxious and avoidant attachment styles in adulthood [2]. This reinforces how the emotional turmoil of adolescent parental loss may persist in future romantic relationships, making secure bonds difficult to establish. Davi's struggle with attachment stems from the disruption of her early framework of relationships.

2.2 Grief and Coping Mechanisms

If the parent dies during the adolescent years, then the person can experience a great loss in their emotional and psychological growth. Grief in this context is more than just mourning, as it includes losing emotional stability. This demonstrates how adolescents might utilize a substitution of external emotional connections after parental loss to cope, even if such relationships might not contain health or stability.

Wieruszowski and Clare L. once indicated that when adolescents experience the death of their parent, they are often emotionally overwhelmed and struggle to develop coherent self-identities [3]. This emotional instability can also be explained by Davi's early bond with Paxton. An emotionally avoidant coping mechanism, often used by adolescents who have not worked through the grief, is to want Paxton's attention and to seek validation by deception.

The study Adolescent Individuation and Identity Formation Following Parental Death also mentions that adolescents who lose their parents struggle with formulating identity [4]. Davi's intense focus on Paxton could indicate that they may display high levels of identity foreclosure, where they commit hastily and unexamined to particular roles or relationships. The relationship is one that can

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be viewed as an identity foreclosure, in which Davi prioritizes superficial connection over living out the emotional and relational intricacies that are necessary for her personal development.

2.3 The Significance of Romantic Relationships in Emotional Recovery

Often, the process of grieving can also cause emotional turmoil, but adolescents can also heal through stable emotional contact. The beginning of Davi's relationship with Ben following her chaotic relationship with Paxton signals a transition towards a more secure attachment. Adolescents who have already experienced parental loss are very likely to enter into emotionally stable relationships as they grow in an attempt to reduce the emotional instability created by their own early experiences of trauma.

According to the study entitled Biological Stress Regulation in Female Adolescents, supportive relationships are critical to stress management in female adolescents [5]. It reinforces that biological markers of grief are better handled by adolescents in the presence of secure attachment figures, such as friends or romantic partners. Such is the supportive relationship Davi has with Ben, whom she starts to trust more emotionally, until she slowly rebuilds her capacity to trust. This is a very important psychological transformation: moving away from looking for emotional comfort through external affirmation and instead developing secure, mutually supportive emotional bonds.

The Long-Term Effects of Childhood Parental Death on Lifetime Adjustment also shows that the negative emotional impact of parental death on adolescents can persist into adulthood if early attachments are broken [1]. However, the establishment of more stable relationships, such as Davi's relationship with Ben, can be a protective factor against the enduring consequences of parental loss. Davi has a pathway to healing because Ben is the secure attachment she didn't receive when her father passed.

2.4 Gender Differences in Grief and Attachment

Empirical studies have shown that gender may affect adolescents' manner of dealing with their parents' death and how they form emotional bonds. The study, Risk Factors in Bereavement: A Comparison Between Pre-Adolescents' and Adolescents' Adaptation to Parental Death, shows that females are more likely to be emotionally tormented after parental loss and are more likely to develop anxious attachment styles [6]. These gender-specific coping mechanisms are shown in Davi's emotional fluctuations and her dependence on validation from Paxton. However, Davi's growing experience of personal growth leads her to seek out more emotionally stable relationships, such as her relationship with Ben, which implies moving towards more secure attachment behaviors.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Attachment Theory

According to Attachment Theory, which John Bowlby introduced in 1969, the emotional bond between a child and their main caregiver plays an essential role in the development of emotional maturity. The initial attachment relationships during childhood create fundamental changes in how children understand relationships, which then shape their later abilities to build relationships. Bowlby established two attachment categories, secure and insecure, which produce lasting effects on emotional management, interpersonal relationships, and personal identities.

3.2 Grief Theory

Bowlby and Parkes, through their Grief Theory, explained that grief reactions after losing someone close become powerful emotional and psychological responses. People experience these reactions

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because their attachment styles developed when they were young. The death of their main caregiver typically affects adolescents emotionally to a severe degree.

3.3 The Role of Coping and Social Support

Grief Theory provides the essential understanding of how Davi handles her father's death through Coping Theory. According to Folkman and Lazarus's transactional model of stress and coping, people form their coping strategies based on their perception of stress and their available personal resources. Davi faces challenges in grief management because her coping patterns interact with social support levels in her life.

Scientists have determined that adolescent grief recovery succeeds through support networks that connect them to both their family members and friends and romantic partners, according to Lindquist. The transition from Paxton to Ben illustrates how social support allows Davi to handle her emotional healing journey.

3.4 Integration of Theoretical Perspectives

The theoretical framework synthesizes Attachment Theory, Grief Theory, and Coping Theory with Davi's parental loss effects on her relationships and attachment behaviors. This emotional distress is produced because her secure attachment with her father is severed, leading her to develop anxious attachment patterns. Grief experiences and poor coping skills make her anxious attachment behaviors grow worse and the relationships with Paxton and Ben become unstable. At first, Paxton represents an emotionally dependent connection that mirrors Davi's grief as she seeks validation, but Ben's relationship reveals Davi's secure attachment behaviors due to his social support.

4. Case Analysis

4.1 Davi and Paxton: The Immediate Emotional Fix

After her dad's early death, Davi is so emotionally devastated that she's acting in a disordered attachment style as life with him is not even imaginable. Children who have experienced early parental loss are expected to have an external source of validation and emotional support, which is Paxton. Davi's reaction to Paxton-hoaxing stories and giving his attention priority over friendships could be interpreted to be an attempt to fill the emotional void left by her dad's passing. This is in accordance with research where children who have suffered early parental loss have been known to initiate romantic affairs in an attempt to deal with grief.

Paxton acts as an interlude to Davi's emotional distress in representing the type of external figure to which teens turn in an attempt to work through mourning before properly processing it. Research such as The Effect of Positive Parenting on Adolescent Life Satisfaction emphasizes parents' importance in emotional management, and Davi's precarious link to Paxton is an indication of her inability to work through her mourning in appropriate ways [1]. Far from working through her grief in a head-on manner, she is grasping at someone who is not in a situation to supply the intense psychic demands born through her unreconciled mourning.

Davi's fixation is maintained by identical internal processes studied in Biological Stress Regulation in Female Adolescents, where dysregulated biological responses among attachment-style youths who experience stress in this context correspond to dysregulated oscillations in cortisol in this subgroup [5]. This dysregulation is manifested in Davi's mercuriness and incessant craving to be reassured by Paxton, in turn rewarded by his attention because she equates his attention to emotional respite.

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4.2 Davi and Ben: The Transition Towards Stability and Emotional Security

Davi's relationship with Paxton is characterized by seeking shallow validation, while her relationship with Ben holds the potential for a secure, though still flawed, emotional connection. Ben represents a secure attachment figure, which Davi pursues as Paxton's transient emotional highs dissipate. Research on childhood parental loss shaping adult romantic attachment indicates that children who suffer parental loss develop avoidant or anxious attachment styles in adulthood due to a lack of emotional regulation at developmentally appropriate stages.

Davi's movement towards emotional stability with Ben reflects her attempt at secure attachment, despite continued struggles with emotional regulation. Her disclosure to Ben about her feelings, in contrast to her behavior with Paxton, shows her attempt for emotional support and stability. However, her attachment to Ben still carries underlying insecurity and dependence, typical of individuals who have not resolved grief. Research on adolescent individuation after parental loss supports this view, indicating that such adolescents often turn to intimate relationships to cope with the emotional aftermath.

In contrast to panicking to win Paxton over to him, Davi establishes his connection in a stylized way with fewer dramas. This can suggest an increased mature attachment style where Davi is searching for emotional comfort and does not crave an overdependence upon validation that was present in his earlier experience with Paxton. Her emotional stability and warmth emerge not because she is searching for external validation but because of experience; she learns that stable mutual emotional bonds are required.

Certain research documents that Davi's emotional dependence upon Ben is an indication of her ongoing emotional vulnerability. Adolescents who have been deprived of parents have difficulty building stable identities independent of those parents and turn to outsiders in an attempt to gain emotional stability. Davi's affair with Ben can be understood in this context to be an attempt to adjust, more constructive in this role than her affair with Paxton, though colored by her ongoing grief.

4..3 The Emotional Repetition: Davi's Ongoing Search for Emotional Security

Davi's interactions with Paxton and Ben both indicate parents' loss of the ability to shape teenage attachment style to lead to patterns towards short-term emotional support to pursue enduring gratification. Her relationship with Paxton is an indicator of an anxious attachment style because she clings to him to deal with her mourning in full recognition that this is an unstable relationship. Her nascent relationship with Ben is an attempt to achieve a better attachment style, yet she is traumatized by her dad's death.

Research on the Long-Term Effects of Parent Death in Childhood on Adjustment in Life indicates that children who survive their parents' deaths experience emotional dysregulation and difficulty in sustaining emotionally secure patterns in adult life [7]. This is evidenced in Davi's life in adult life, where an internalized psychological struggle between her intense emotional insecurity and increased sensitivity to recognizing healthier, stable patterns in relationships is taking place.

Her interactions with Paxton and subsequently with Ben suggest an attempt to achieve emotional wholeness through an incessant process where her initial bond with Paxton is an attempt to complete her emotional void through an external source that is not ultimately trustworthy. Her subsequent return to Ben is an indication that an awareness is emerging in her that emotional wholeness and closeness can only be achieved through an abiding support system, though not free from her grief, able to support her in working through her grieving process.

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5. Discussion

5.1 Key Findings: Insights from Davi's Relationships

A significant point to be gleaned is in both Davi's relationship with Paxton and her relationship with Ben, mirroring teenage reactions to mourning over the loss of a parent. Her relationship with Paxton is seemingly fueled by an attempt to get something in return rather than an emotional reaction, an attempt to get what her dad has failed to love her in return. Her relationship with Ben is not perfect in every way, yet it is something closer to an equalized emotional reaction. This is an indicator that in this novel, over time, Davi is coming to gain healthier ways to deal with grief and to have healthier relationships.

Furthermore, the interweaving between Davi's romantic relationships is meant to symbolize fluidity in patterns of attachment that can shift in response to individuals' processing grief. This is in alignment with Grief Theory that suggests grief is not linear or automatic in process but is something that can adjust in response to individuals' evolving coping patterns and emotional awareness. Davi shifting to a secure and balanced attachment style in her relationship with Ben is an inspiring reflection that teens can recover and work towards healthier attachment over time.

5.2 Research Limitations and Areas for Improvement

While the outcomes in this paper are informative to note, several limitations remain to be managed in future work. One is that this paper only addresses a hypothetical protagonist in a single television series. Though Davi's experience through grieving parents is an engaging case to analyze, this sample does not approximate response variety and coping techniques in real-world adolescents. Future work can be validated better by including qualitative interviewing with real-world adolescents who have lived through grieving parents to allow an extensive observation about these individuals' coping style and attachment patterns.

Additionally, adopting an extended paradigm can work to depths beyond. Only in a season does *Never Have I Ever* have development in Davi, yet an extended consideration following children who have lost parents can have rich implications regarding grief development and patterns of attachment over time.

Another limitation is that insufficient work has been done to analyze diverse forms of social relationships that can support Davi in her process of recovery. This paper is generally centered around romantic relationships between her and Paxton and Ben, whereas theoretical perceptions, such as Friendship Theory, suggest peer support in emotional growth in teenage individuals. Future work should be done to establish ways in which friendships and expansive social circles influence attachment patterns and coping in teenage individuals following the loss of a parent.

6. Conclusion

This research addresses to implications of parents' loss during childhood upon teenage patterns of attachment by analyzing consideration in *Never Have I Ever* in an attempt to better understand in-depth the way in which this experience influences emotional responses in these individuals through observations of these individuals towards Paxton and towards Ben. From an informed standpoint, bringing both Attachment Theory and theory about grief to bear, this consideration creates an in-depth consideration of both emotional responses toward parents' loss during teenage life, an evaluation of both emotional responses towards these individuals, and an observation of these individuals in these contexts.

Additionally, the work emphasizes peer connection during recovery. Davi's evolving attachment to Ben ultimately illustrates an increased secure emotional connection that implies recoverability and

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coping capacity in grief. This evolution in her relating patterns is in alignment with earlier work in adolescent grief that implies that while teens can have maladaptive relating patterns to loss in earlier development, later in life, they can have healthier patterns in coping.

For adolescent audiences in general, the life of Davi is an eye-opening presentation about ways in which grief and mourning can disrupt emotional development and social development, while giving an undertone of promise about emotional growth and healing. The representation of changing patterns in attachment by Davi inspires audiences to think about their own patterns in relationships, in particular ways in which they form connections in adversity. Through a presentation of a messy emotional map of grief and the potentiality of healing, youths are encouraged to cherish support-seeking and reflection in reaction to adversity.

It is necessary to point out limitations in this work, most notably in working with an imaginary individual. Future work can draw upon these findings by including longitudinal studies or case studies of adolescents who have lived through experiences through their parents. Furthermore, examining peer support systems and therapy in assisting in reducing grieving can provide an in-depth knowledge of grief among youths.

In summary, *Never Have I Ever* offers a true reflection on grieving, making it an invaluable guide for teens experiencing similar struggles. The emotional connection between the audience and the protagonist's struggles provides relatable insights, while the portrayal of growth and rehabilitation offers important lessons. However, the series touches on mature themes and complex relationship dynamics that may require guidance for teenage audiences. Accordingly, it is best suited for mature teens who can grasp its emotional nuances. With proper support, the series can serve as a starting point for greater awareness of grief's impact on adolescent emotional regulation and attachment.

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