

**“Sugar Daddy’s” Syndrome and Its Implication for Societal
Stability: Re-Reading Agwuna’s *Iko Onye Ji Ama***

By:

Okeyika, Juliet Ifunanya

Department of Igbo, African and Communication Studies
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
ji.okeyika@unizik.edu.ng

Abstract

Recently, some female folks think that they must get what they want, especially the materialistic things. They want to survive by all means no matter the source. In a bid to do so, they find sugar daddies for themselves. Most times, the said sugar daddies are men who are much older than them and can afford their needs so long as they get what they want. They believe that nothing goes for nothing. It is said that everything has a repercussion. Literature has in so many ways helped in shaping the lives of the masses. Drama on the other hand, mimics an existing character which most times, is questionable, for people to read or watch and be mindful of the characters they exhibit. In view of this, this paper uses *Iko Onye Ji Ama* an Igbo drama text to illustrate some of the implications of the above-mentioned syndrome and how it affects the stability of the society and also to the person who practices it. Reader response approach is employed for discussion. This piece of information will be useful to female folks out there who fail to understand that there is no such thing as ‘Free Meal’ and also to those (still females) who think that the sugar daddies are their ‘saviours’, to re-trace their footsteps.

Keywords: “sugar daddy”, syndrome, literature, drama, implication, societal stability, reader response approach

Introduction

A “sugar daddy” is a man who is of age and has all it takes, especially money to satisfy an in searchable girl/woman. The girl in question, sees him as her money-making machine because he gives it to her as at when due. Of recent, the issue of sugar daddy has become a trending factor in the society. In order to meet up, girls now go in search of their own and when they find, they feel fulfilled. One may wonder where and how come it bears the name, of all the coded names in the world. As a researcher, I believe and have come to realize that the name depicts its meaning. Take for instance, ‘sugar’ is known for its sweetness. Nothing tastes sweeter than it. Then ‘daddy’ means someone who is one’s father. This means that anyone who is a sugar daddy is old enough to be the father of the girl involved. With the analysis stated, the name really talks about the context by which the name is used. In the actual sense, life is so sweet when it supplies every needed thing to a seeker. In this case, an older man is sweet when he provides a girl with all she needs. Ironically speaking, no one is without a need, no matter how buoyant the person is. The only thing that matters is contentment. The Igbo people will say *ihe na-atọ ụtọ na-egbukwa egbu*. This implies that whatever thing that is sweet, has a tendency of destruction/to kill. The “sugar daddy” thing, is without a syndrome. This sugar daddy syndrome has a pattern of symptoms that characterize or indicate social condition. It is a predictable, characteristic pattern of behaviour, action e.t.c. that tends to occur under certain circumstances. This shows that something triggers it which makes it to be seen as a ‘life changer’ for some girls in the present-day society. Social stability on the other hand implies or refers to the range of life structure and reliable routine that is protective against further situational implications and hazards and helps maintain connections with societal expectations. This indeed, is the wish of every society; to be void of ills. The sugar daddy syndrome has done more harm than good to the society through the individuals

involved. This will be clearly illustrated in the Agwuna's selected Igbo drama text; *Iko Onye Ji Ama*.

Theoretical framework

As stated above, Reader Response approach is employed for this research. It is theory too and will be used for analysis purposes in order to do justice to the topic. The emphasis of this approach is based on analysing what part that the reader plays in making out meaning of a text. Ogene (2010) states clearly that this approach holds the view that no meaning exists in the text, until the reader reads it. He further stated that unlike the idea established in the formalistic approach, this approach imposes the task of creating the meaning in a text on the reader. He also was of the view that the reader response approach does not admit the idea that literature texts are universal or that literature texts will always either be more than what it is or less the same to its reader anywhere. For further emphasis, he cited Norman Holland which says that every reader will impose his or her 'identity theme' on the text, to a larger extent recreating that text in reader's image. This according to him, presupposes that the personality of a reader can be discovered through his or her reading of a text book. In all these, one thing is certain about this approach and that is; deriving a theme from the reader's perceptive and perception of the text he or she has read. Coming up with a striking theme after reading a literature text, is not bad. One is entitled to his or her own opinion which could differ from other persons' interpretations. DiYanni (2002) says that reader response theory raises the question of where literary meaning resides. This means that readers re-create themselves.

Summary of *Iko Onye Ji Ama*

Iko Onye Ji Ama is an Igbo drama text written by Agwuna Stella Ogechukwu. It is made up of 103 pages. It talks about Loveline

who is married to Zikoora who lost his job because of false accusation in his work place. These parents have two children; a son and a daughter, namely- Ucheoma and Adaaku. Loveline runs a restaurant and uses that medium to flirt with married men who would solve her insatiable demands. She does not respect her husband and talks back at him each time he tries to advise her. Her daughter Adaaku is not left out of this ill behaviour. She seizes the opportunity to give out her contact to 'her mother's men' who visit her in school and 'spoil' her. On the other hand, has a family with Chinaazaekpere and Iheonyemetere as wife and husband.

They have children who are also in the university. Iheonyemetere is an illiterate wayward man who lavishes his money on women and Loveline happens to be one of them. He does not take care of his family but prefers satisfying other women's needs outside. His wife Chinaaza knows about her husband's stupidity but prefers not to pay him back in the same coin. She learns a lesson from what happened to her friend Chimanzo who gallivanted with sugar daddies during her school days. With this, she decides to take the bull by its horn and fights Loveline in her shop for snatching her husband from her. Zikoora on the other hand gets tired of hearing about his wife's incessant attitude. He tries every now and then to call her to order but every attempt fell on deaf ears. There is always a saying that you reap what you sow. Nemesis caught up with all of them; Iheonyemetere and Loveline. Adaaku who happens to be Loveline's daughter is not left out. She got her own share of the repercussion. This is because she was having an affair with Iheonyemetere who also happens to be her mother's 'man'. She was driven out of her husband's house and threatened to kill herself because life according to her, seems so unfair to her.

Analysis

Some Reasons for the Indulgence from the characters

experience

In this Igbo play, the characters who happen to be victims of the said syndrome are Chimanjo, Loveline, Adaaku and Ekwutosi. Of course, these mentioned characters are females. Greed drove them to such ill behaviours. They all got for themselves, older men in the name of sugar daddies who satisfied them materially and otherwise. According to the characters, some of the reasons why they indulge in this act are mentioned. Chimanjo who happens to be Chinaaaze's friend narrated hers. From her own experience she narrated to her friend in pages 12 and 13, it was made clear that she saw it as fun and it was a decision, she made for herself. This is shown as thus;

Chimanjo: Mgbe m nọ na mahadum, anaghị m ekweta ụmụnwọke enyi ma ọ bụrụ na ọ bughị nwoke lugoro nwaanyi. Naanị ụmụnwọke lugoro nwaanyi na-amasị m. Ihe m ji achọkarị ha bụ, etu ha si agwa m na m bụ nwa agboghobia mana nwunye ha e meela ochie. O nweghị ihe ọ bụla m choro m anaghị enweta. O nwere nke ahụ anaghị ekwe m ezu ike, oge ụfọdụ, ọ na-ebu ụzọ kwuchaara m ụgwọ akwụkwọ... Ọ zutaara m ụgbọala 'Jeep'... Mụ na ya agaala Hong-Kong na Dubai...

English version:

Chimanjo: When I was in the university, I do not agree to befriend men if they are not married men. It is only men that are married that gladden my heart. The reason why I look out for them is that they tell me that I am a young girl but their wives are old/outdated. There is nothing that I wanted that I never had. There is this particular one who does not allow me to rest, sometimes, he would first pay my school fees... He bought a Jeep for me ... we both have travelled to Hong-Kong and Dubai.

From the above, the reader notices that Chimanjo feels 'blessed' being with the sugar daddies. Emphasis is now on the reason why she prefers older men to younger ones. They transfer all their love to her instead of their wives. It is observed here that she never lacked anything. What she demands, she gets. She also gets the ones she did not demand for. From the reader's point of view, Chimanjo sees herself as someone who cannot get all those material things if she had dated younger men or maybe, they may not have the spirit of spending. In her own case, she was convinced by her friend back then in the university that sugar daddies are the best. This was also seen in page 15 when she was narrating it to Chinaazaekpere as thus;

Chimanjo: Ọ bụ Ebele enyi m nwaanyi nke Imo Steeti ahụ ka m leere anya wee na-emegheri. Ị maara na mmadu na-esite n'ụdiri enyi o nwere gbanwee ezi ozuzu ọ natara n'aka ndi mụrụ ya?

English version:

Chimanjo: It is Ebele that my friend from Imo State that I was following her footsteps. Do you know that someone could as a result of bad friend influence, throw away the good home training he/she received from his/her parents?

It is true that the character Chimanjo, shifted the blame of her ill attitude to another person but that is not acceptable as ignorance is not an excuse for any crime. The reader is of the view that anyone who is in the university as a student, is not a minor and so should be accountable for her actions.

On the other hand, Adaaku was seen in this book emphasizing on the gains they get as a result of her mother's friendship with sugar daddies. At that point, she was not talking to anyone in particular. She was only appreciating the 'good works and roles of the sugar daddies in their family. This was

shown in page 39 as thus;

Adaaku: Gịni ka nne mere? Ọ buru na ọ bughị ihe a nne na-eme, kedụ ihe anyị kaara ime? Chukwu ekwela ka ụdiri nwoke dị ka papa bịara m di. O nwere ego ọ na-eweta n'ụlọ a?

English version:

Adaaku: What did mother do? If not for the things that mother do, how would we have done? God forbid that a man like father would come seek for my hand in marriage, does he bring any money home?

Indeed, using the reader response theory to look at that passage, it is to be observed that the man of the house is handicapped; which means that he practically brings nothing home and as such, the wife assumes the role of the bread winner of the family. She was able to do all of those things, because she had sugar daddies. Obviously, those men are married men and are older than her in all ramifications.

Adaaku also is also seen in the same page (39) talking about her own sugar daddy. She reveals how she worships him because of his riches. She talks about him and how he never hesitates to give her money, each time she asks for it. This is shown as thus;

Adaaku: “Unkulu” Iheonyemetara ga- a bjakwa taa. M ga-ariọ ya ego taa ma ọ bja. Nwoke ahụ bụ Akajiaku. Oge ọ bula m gwara ya okwu ego, o nye m ya ozigbo ozigbo.

English version

Adaaku: ...Uncle Iheonyemetara will come today. I will beg him for money when he comes today. That man is Akajiaku (the hand that holds wealth). Anytime I tell him about money, he gives it to me

without wasting time.

From the above illustration, the reader observes from the tone of the above-mentioned character; Adaaku, that she cannot wait to meet her sugar daddy. She is super excited that he would come that day. The Igbo people would say that; *onye bu igu ka ewu na-eso*. This means that it is he who carries or has the palm fronds that the goat follows. This is because the person has what the goat eats. For Adaaku to be expecting her sugar daddy with so much excitement, shows that he has so much money, which is the reason for everything.

For Adaaku also, it was her decision to date Iheonyemetara. No one mandated her to do so. She wants to satisfy her limitless urge. Also, from the reader's point of view, the environment that she finds herself into, also contributed to her ill behavior. In the play, she accompanies her mother to her restaurant and sees what her mother does there which is not worthy of emulation. She quickly queued in and follows suit. This probably is the reason why she waited for an opportunity to execute her plan, without her mother's knowledge. In page 43, it is seen as thus;

Loveline: (*Ka o kuliri puo, Adaaku nwa ya nwaanyi
wee bja noro Iheonyemetara n'akuku, jide ya aka,
werekwa ihu ihere adighi si ya*)

English version:

Loveline: (*When she stood up and left, Adaaku her
daughter came and sat down beside Iheonyemetara,
held his hand and with a shy free face, said to him*)

This, from the reader's understanding, was Adaaku's first attempt. The reader notices that she knew that what she wanted to do at that point was unacceptable to her mother and the society at large. Unacceptable to her mother because she knows that the man in question, is her mother's 'man', hence the reason for her to wait for her mother to leave before

approaching him (Iheonyemetara. Unacceptable by the society because from the reader's point of view, she is not proud of her actions.

On the other hand, Loveline who happens to be Adaaku's mother has numerous sugar daddies, among who are; Iheonyemetara and Andy. She associates herself with them because of the material things she gets from them, especially money. Her own attitude towards this type of life is unacceptable both to her husband and the society and both frown at it. The bible also frowns at it because she is a married woman who commits adultery. For the character involved, she enjoys playing those sugar daddies who spend on her because they also get what they want. The summary of her reason for getting involved with sugar daddies is captured when her daughter hurriedly came home to tell his brother and father that the wife of Iheonyemetara is fighting their mother in her restaurant;

Adaaku: Ọ dị ka ọ bụ nwunye nwoke ahụ nke ahụ ị maara. Nke na-ebunye nne anyị ego.

English version:

Adaaku: It is like it is the wife of that man that you know. The one that loads our mother with money.

The reader gathers here from the word *ebunye* that the sugar daddy in question here does not just give Loveline money but gives it to her bountifully. "Give" to the Igbo word *ebunye* is a lighter way of explaining what is meant here. *Ebunye*, has to do with carrying, and therefore semantically speaking, adds weight to the context in which it is used.

Ekwutosi who is the last female on the list is a 'ghost' character who never surfaced or spoke in the play. She is more or less regarded as a minor character. She is the first daughter of Iheonyemetara and Chinaazaekpere. She also had a sugar daddy in the text who happens to be an Hausa man, an Alhaji

who has two wives. From the reader's point of view, it is seen that Ekwutosi as an undergraduate student, wants to 'belong' in the campus and the 'best' way she thinks it could be achieved is by having a sugar daddy.

How does the syndrome affect individual/society?

The praying wife: In some cases, the said sugar daddies have their wives at home. Because they feel they have all it takes to take care of their wives, some of their wives keep mute to their ill behaviours and see it that they have infidels as husband. It does not only end there; the wives go to the extent of going on their knees to say dangerous prayers for their husbands and sometimes the 'strange lady/woman' scattering her home. This type of prayer seems to be very effective as it affects the said strange woman in one way or the other. In this selected drama text, it is seen in page 14 as thus; Chinaazaekpere: *Ọ bughị naanị nke ahụ. Nwaanyị ị na-anaghara di ya ga na-esukwara gị aka n'ala, naebuso gị agha, na-ekpekwa ajọ ekpere n'isi gị.*

English version:

...It is not only that. The woman you are collecting her husband from, will be hitting her hand on the ground for you, fighting you and will be making a dangerous prayer on your head.

The fear of a wounded woman's sincere prayer, is the beginning of wisdom. The contemporary society is filled with emotional casualties and trauma as a result of the outcome of these women's prayers. It may not come quickly after the prayer but the result and effect are certain. This is seen as what Chimango nurses in her mind as the reason for her misfortunes. This tallies with the biblical saying that 'what God has joined together, let no man put asunder'. In that case, another person putting asunder is a thief and must receive his or her reward as such. Chimango's fears was seen in page 14

as thus;

Chimanjo: Echetara m na o nwere ụbọchị ọ gwara m na nwunye ya bụ ekwensu, na ọ na-ekpe ajọ ekpere gbasara nwaanyị ọ bụla ọ na-alakwuru nke naetinyere ya aka ọjọọ n'ezinaụlọ ya. Biko Chinaaza, ị sị na ọ bughị ajọ ekpere nwunye Jọn kpekọbara n'isi m na-apụta ihe na ndụ m ugbua?

English version

Chimanjo: I remembered a day he told me that his wife is a devil, that she prays dangerous prayers for any woman that he goes to stay with who is putting evil hand in her family. Please Chinaaza, are you sure that it is not the evil prayer that John's wife prayed on my head that is affecting my life now?

From all indications, things are not moving well with her hence, her complaints. There is a saying that 'a clear conscience fears no accusation'. The Igbo people will equally say *onye enweghị ihe o bu, enweghị ihe ọ na-akwafu*; meaning that one who is not carrying anything, is not afraid of something pouring out or falling off him. Chimanjo has no clear conscience. She faces misfortunes in her marriage as a result of her past mistakes which emanated from a syndrome, she considered a lifestyle in the past.

The Sugar Daddies: Those ones are not left out of the syndrome. Most times, they are affected in one way or the other. Huge amount of money is mostly involved in the process of satisfying their prey. Some of them are affected in the process as a result of extravagant lives. In this play, Iheonyemetara is affected. His money dwindled. He was busy catching air and things were not going well with his business and he did not notice it because he was too 'busy' with Loveline. At that point also, he was a skeleton of himself. He had virtually nothing monetarily, to offer to his wife. It is said

that one cannot eat his cake and have it back. He chose Loveline over his wife and made her his priority. This brought regrets which by then, was too late to turn back the hand of time. This is shown in page 67 as thus;

Iheonyemetara: ...ihe na-ewute m bụ na emefuchara m ọtụtụ ego n'isi ya. A kwọchaara m aka tiere ọkụkọ akị.

English version:

Iheonyemetara: ...what pains me is that I have squandered major part of my money on her. I washed my hands and broke palm kernel for a fowl.

Not only that he became poor, his home never remained the same, no peace in his house and his family scattered. This is captured in page 67 as thus;

Iheonyemetara: Ọ bughị ego ka m nweziri... Ọ bughị udo ka m nwere ...Ezinaụlọ m, aghasachaala!

English version:

Iheonyemetara: It is not money that I have again... It is not peace that I have ... My family is shattered!

The sins of the father to his offspring also visited his daughter; Ekwutosị. One of her eyes was punctured. Her daughter really towed her father's footstep. This is seen when a lady came to tell her parents what happened to their daughter, as thus;

Nwagboghobija Si UNIJOS: ...O nwere nwoke onye Awusa lụgoro nwaanyị ha abụọ na-eme enyi. Nwoke Alhaji ahụ chọtaara ya ụlọ ebe ahụ, o si aga akwụkwọ. ...Ụbọchi ndị nwunye abụọ Alhaji ahụ chọputara ihe diha na-eme, ha were iwe, kpuputa Ekwutosị, gbaa ya ọtọ, tupusịa ibu ya niile n'ezị wee kụpịa ya otu anya. Amaghị m ma o jizikwa anya ahụ ahụ ụzọ ugbua.

English version

Nwagboghobia Si UNIJOS: ...There is this Hausa man who is married that she is friends with. That Alhaji man found the apartment where she goes to school, from. ...The day that the two wives of the Alhaji found out what their husband has been doing, in anger, they brought Ekwutosi out, stripped her naked, threw all her properties out and punctured one of her eyes. I do not know if she still sees with that eye.

The emphasis of reader response approach is based on analysing what part that the reader plays in making out meaning of a text. In this context and from the reader's perception, Iheonyemetara as a sugar daddy did not only get the repercussion of his ill lifestyle; his daughter did, too. If he had known that what he does in the secret has a way of bringing itself to the open, he would not have subjected himself to such mess. The Igbo people will say; nne ewu naata agbara, nwa ya ana ele ya anya n'onu. This when translated to English implies; when the female goat is eating a harmful grass, the kid is automatically watching or looking. In this case, it is not only looking or watching. It is learning and would explore when the time comes. So, for Iheonyemetara, his daughter Ekwutosi was indirectly emulating his father's behaviour, which unfortunately landed her into losing one of her eyes.

“The Benefactors”: In this case, the women involved in the act will be termed ‘the benefactors. They are not free from the said syndrome. In this selected text, Adaaku and Loveline are the ‘benefactors’ who got affected by the syndrome. It is every reasonable mother's dream and wish to see her daughter grow into a responsible woman, get married and succeed. In Loveline's case, her daughter got married to Clinton and did not last in it. She complains of the ill treatment she gets from her said husband. She even had to subject herself to

committing suicide by getting drowned (pg 88) but was talked out of it. She left marriage and came back to leave with her parents. Loveline, has no moral justifications whatsoever to talk to her son- in- law because her daughter towed her path. Both mother, daughter and the society are affected here. In the real sense of it, younger girls may think that marriage is a do or die affair or an entity where it is almost impossible to survive or last in.

What to do/suggestions

From every indication, sugar daddy is a syndrome that affects both the young and the old. It is increasing on daily basis in the society due to the rate of hardship and 'I want to belong' lifestyle. This notwithstanding, something needs to be done and done quickly about it, to avoid it spreading like wild fire in the society, where it could be seen as a norm. With these, the following suggestions are made;

- i. Contentment is the key to checkmate ill lifestyle. From the text, the persons involved or who were victims of the syndrome, lack this. They were not deformed, yet they want to get things they never worked for and this gave rise to sugar daddy menace.
- ii. Providing for our children especially the daughters. This is fundamental. A girl child should be adequately cared and chattered for. The reason for 'looking around' comes up when they are in need. The reason for this suggestion is that, the girl child is vulnerable.
- iii. Adults should live a life worthy of emulation. The younger one's watch, learn and explore easily, the

lifestyle they get or learn from them. Not only this, it is believed that what goes around, has a way of coming around. There is also a saying that goes this way; ‘do to others what you would want them do to you’. This says it all.

- iv. Patience is vital in every relationship not to talk of marriage. The downfall of a man is not the end of his life. Wives should not misbehave or misdirect their children because of a temporary financial incapacitation of the bread winner of the family. They should always have it at the back of their minds that no condition is permanent and that no one knows tomorrow.

Conclusion

Literature has a way of exposing the ills in the society. The playwright does this through his storyline by using the characters in the play. It is believed that drama is meant to be acted on a stage for the spectators to watch and grab meaning out of the display. This is one of the reasons why most of the drama texts focus more on morality by exposing negative trends in the society for the people to see and re-trace their steps. In the analysed drama text, Agwuna tried to expose the ill behaviours of some wealthy group of men who feel they have ‘arrived’ and should do whatever they want, because they believe that money stops all nonsenses. From the reader response point of view, this research tries to see those caliber of men as causing more harm than good to individuals and to the society at large.

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