

PARENTAL NEGLIGENCE OF SEX EDUCATION IN *AGWA NTI*: CONSEQUENCES AND WAYS FORWARD

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Abstract

Sex and education are two different ideologies that are intricately linked. Whereas the first one means sexual intercourse or the act of sexual intercourse, the latter means the process or act of imparting knowledge, fact and so on, either formally or informally. Sex education therefore means imparting facts about sexual intercourse to a person or group of persons. On several occasions, children fall victims of uninformed sex casualties simply because some parents feel that they should not discuss such things with their 'little' children, hence the need for such children to be misled by their peers. There are no works in the past as regards the above mentioned title which used the selected text for this work as a case study, hence the purpose of this work which is to use the Igbo novel *Agwa Nti* to expose to such parents and the society at large, the dangers of allowing peers to have self sex education. This descriptive research uses realism theory. Realism theory is a theory which portrays literature as a reflection of every day happenings in the society. Some findings made from this work include that sex education is a must do for every child at a certain age and stage, especially female children and that parents should endeavor to give their children clear knowledge on the dangers of having intercourse before marriage to avoid peer influence and most times could yield negative outcomes. It is to be suggested that parents should constantly observe their children especially daughters to determine any negative change or peer influence.

Keywords: Sex Education, Negligence, Consequence (s)

Introduction

Literature has been proven severally to be a portrayer of societal issues. It exposes both the good and ills of life to the society for easy correction and amendments. The works of literature at all times, have a particular set of people they are referring to. They could be to the youth children, couples, women and so on. This could only be known when it is read. In view of the above, this research tries to drive home a point bearing the parents and their children in mind. The dream of every parent is to see his or her child (especially daughter (s)) grow successfully without dent. This can only be possible and achieved when that child knows what he or she should do or not do at every point in time. Ignorant of any vital knowledge of life could result to disastrous damage and regrets and most times, death.

The topic of this research which is a reality of the outer world, tends to draw the attention of parents to their children on the need for sex education. *Agwa Nti* is the novel selected for the purpose of this work, to reveal the outcome of parents' negligence on sex education for such parents to be watch dogs of their children to avoid disaster or life time pains. Sexuality is part of human life and development. It develops during childhood and accelerates through adolescence. According to Hershel (1976:42), "sex education is a powerful force and its true meaning has to be revealed to adolescent to enable them make rational decision based on self-control and personal code of conduct". This therefore means that sex education is desired to replace ignorance, fear, secrecy and guilt with knowledge understanding, openness and rationality. Ruiz (2010:39) expresses his opinion in view of the need for sex education in adolescents. He states that "sex education can equip young people with the knowledge that they need to recognize and report sexual harassment and assault". Cushman (2013:72) in his response to this, says that "teaching young people about sex and sexuality can fundamentally shift their views on critical issues like consent, abuse and assault". He further stated that when parents wait to have conversations about sex with their children until they are off at college that they are really doing too little, or rather too late. In the contemporary society, young people get information about sex and sexuality from a wide range of sources including each other, through the media including advertising, television and magazines as well as leaflets, books and websites which are intended to be sources of information about sex and sexuality. Some of this will be accurate and some inaccurate. This work will therefore use the above

mentioned selected novel to inculcate into parents into finding out what the young children already know, adding to their existing knowledge and correcting misinformation, because without correct information, young children can put themselves at greater risk.

Conceptual Studies

The title of this research has given rise to the definitions of some concepts for easy understanding of this research work. The concepts include; sex education, negligence and consequence.

Sex Education

Sex education is a broad term used to describe education about human sexual anatomy, sexual reproduction, sexual intercourse and other aspects of human sexual behavior. This typically shows that sex education is not a new term which is strictly for humans. It can also be a highly quality teaching and learning about a broad variety of topics related to sex and sexuality, exploring values and beliefs about those topics and gaining the skills that are needed to navigate relationships and manage one's own sexual health. This means that sex education may take place in schools, in community settings or online.

In line with the above definitions, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Inc.(1916) which is American's largest provider of sex education, reaching 1.2 million people a year, believes that "parents play a critical and central role in providing sex education". Sex education plays a vital role in humans because it helps people gain information, skills and motivation to make healthy decisions about sex and sexuality. This entails to the fact that it is also instruction on issues relating to human sexuality, including human sexual anatomy, sexual reproduction, sexual activity, reproductive health, emotional relations, reproductive rights and responsibilities, sexual abstinences and birth control. The common avenues for sex education are parents, formal school programs and public health campaigns. This falls in line with the dictionary definition of sex education which states that sex education is education on subject of sexual activity and sexual relationships.

Negligence

Negligence means failure to take proper care over something. It is an important concept which is usually defined as the failure to use the care that a normally careful person would, in a given situation. This definition was given by Posner (1972:29). This implies that it is a habitual failure to do the required thing. In line with these definitions, the lawyers see it as a civil wrong, whereby a person or party is in breach of a legal duty of care to another which results in loss or injury to the claimant. What this definition shows or talks about is that negligence always results into injury or loss at the end as it befalls the victim because it is the quality condition of being negligent. The concept of negligence can also mean failure to give enough care or attention to someone or something that one is responsible for.

Consequence(s)

Consequences as a word, is the plural of the word 'consequence'. Consequence therefore, is that which follows something on which it depends; or that which is produced by a cause. It can also be regarded as a result of an action or actions. These imply that it is a result or effect, typically one that is unwelcome or unpleasant. It usually comes after or as a result of something one does. Another definition of it is by the American Heritage dictionary (2016:123) and it defines consequence as "something that logically or naturally follows from an action or condition". It is also called a punishment or negative repercussion.

Synopsis of the Novel *Agwa Nti*

Agwa Nti is a sixty-eight paged Igbo novel and It is a story of the family of Onwudinjo and his wife Obiageli who were married for years without a child but finally was blessed with a daughter whom they named Adamma. They both love her so much and gives her every material thing that she needs, sent her to the highest paid school from primary to secondary. She performs excellently well in primary schools and some part of secondary school until she became a 'big girl' in later part of her secondary class. She was noticed by her two female classmates who were looking for whom to devour. Initially when those friends approached her for friendship, she was ignorant of virtually everything that they were saying as regards 'boy friendship'. This gave her friends the opportunity to feed her with all

manner of lies just to get her involved into the kind of crime that they commit. Ebere and Ngozi were the said friends and the later introduced Adamma to her own male friend; Chike, who took it upon himself to be lavishing on Adamma, little did she know that she was digging her own pit by herself and that nothing goes in vain. She started performing poorly in school, in domestic chores and only thinks about Chike. She moves all her spirit to always longing to see him over and over again and hear all the deceptive things that come out of his mouth, without knowing that the heart of some men is not as pure and sweet as the words that come out of their mouths.

Adamma's parents noticed the negative changes and never deemed it necessary to investigate the cause of their daughter's change in behavior and academics. This Adamma's friendship thing with Chike continued until he lured her and impregnated her and because of fear and shame, she couldn't relate what happened to her parents and this led to her friends suggesting that she does an abortion. She succumbed to it and this led to her death.

Parental Negligence of Sex Education in the Novel; *Agwa Nti*

In this novel, the person who was a victim of parental negligence of sex education is Adamma. Though she was the only child of her parents and never lacked anything that money can buy, she lacked knowledge of the dos and don'ts of sex. It was because her parents never considered it a necessary thing to do. Her parents only focused their attention and advice on 'read your books and make us proud'. They diverted all their advice to academics. This was seen from pages 16-17 when her father was advising her a night before she entered secondary school as thus;

...nwa m, dika i na-abanye uloakwukwo
sekondiri echi, achoro m ka i hie asaa n'anya
n'ih na uloakwukwo sekondiri abughi oku
nwata gba ngada anya. Otutu umuaka ndi ma
akwukwo nke oma n'emechaa buru nnukwu iti
n'ih na ha na-eso ndi na-amaghi uru akwukwo bara.
Ya mere, buru opuriche n'uloakwukwo unu.

English version:

...my daughter, as you are entering a secondary class tomorrow, I want you to be very careful because secondary classes are not easy at all. Most brilliant students could in the long run, become dummies because of bad friends who do not know the value of education. So, be an outstanding child in your school.

Although Adamma never lacked anything that she needs in school, it was not enough for her upbringing. It was shown in page 16 that her parents bought her so many things that she needed for her secondary schooling.

Ha gara gote ihe ndi Adamma ga-eji banye uloakwukwo.
Ihe ndi a gunyere akpa akwukwo, uwe akwukwo, mkpisi
odee, akpukpu ukwu, d.g.z.

Englishversion: They bought the required things that Adamma needs for her schooling. Those things include school bag, school uniform, writing material, school shoes and so on.

Despite the fact that she was overwhelmed with joy with all these, they were not enough to keep her going. Those things were essential things for her school but she equally needs all round education for her survival and for application to her day to day activities. To Adamma, making parents proud is just all about reading, passing examinations and taking the first position. She was totally ignorant of sex education. This was seen in page twenty-one (21) as thus;

Adamma bu onye nke mbu n'ihe gbasara akwukwo;

Onye nke mbu n'idi ocha nakwa onye nke mbu n'isopuru
ndi toro ya n'uloakwukwo ha. (Pg 21)

English version: Adamma is the first in everything that pertains academics;

The first in being neat and the first in respecting her elders in her school.

Adamma as brilliant as she was, was ignorant of sex education. This means that brilliance is not the ultimate thing or does not surpass knowledge. Intelligence matters too. This was the reason why Ebere and Ngozi brainwashed her by coaching her. She (Adamma) had just one definition of love; as when someone has genuine affection for his or her neighbor.

“...na a maara m ihunanya di ka mmadu inwe
mmasị di omimi ebe mmadu ibe ya no”. (Pg 33)

English version: “...that I know love as having deep affection for one another”.

Her response here to Ebere and Ngozi showed that she was a J.J.C. When Ebere asked her for the name of the person she has strong feelings for, she was surprised about that and this was seen as:

...ka m jugodu gi; o di onye i nwere mmasi di omimi di maobu
onye nwere mmasi di omimi n'ebe i no? Ebere juru.
Ajuru a gbagwojuru Adamma anya. Kamgbe o jiri buru
mmadu, o nwebeghi onye o bua o nwegoro mmasi n'ebe
o no ma ewezuga nne na nna ya. (Pg 33)

English version: ...let me ask you; is there anyone that you have deep feelings for or does anyone has deep feelings for you? Ebere asked. This question confused Adamma as she had never had any deep feelings for anyone expect her parents.

This made Ebere and Ngozi to have strong influence over her thoughts.

Chei! Nke a gosiri na o dighi ihe i maara ma ncha.
Nne na nna gi abughi ndi anyi na-ekwu maka ha. Ndi
anyi na-ekwu maka ha bu umuaka ndi gi na ha
abughi nwanne. (Pg 34)

English version: Chei! This shows that you know nothing at all. Your parents are not the people we are referring to. We are talking about those you have no blood relationship with.

They confused Adamma to the extent that they made her to believe that her parents do not really matter when it comes to her advancement as a ‘big girl’.

Nne, ka m gwa gi ihe i maghi. O di otutu ihe
nne na nna gi apughi imere gi nke enyi gi nwoke
maobu nwaanyi ga-emere gi(Pg 34-35)

English version: My dear, let me tell you what you do not know.

There are so many things that your parents can not do for you but your boyfriend or girlfriend can....

Adamma's response after Ngozi said this, brought the suggestion and introduction of her own boyfriend.

Kedu ihe bu ihe ndi ahụ? Adamma juru.
Enyi m i pughi imata ihe ndi ahụ sooso
na o buru na i nwere enyi nwoke. (Pg 35)

English version: What are those things? Adamma asked. My friend you cannot know those things unless you have a boyfriend.

Her continuous question of; *kedu ka nwata nwaanyi si enweta enyi nwoke?* (how can a female get a male friend) led her friends into getting one for her.

The Way Forward for Parents

Education for children is the sole aim of everyone especially parents. Parental type of education is done informally in this aspect. What the parents do when it comes to teaching their children this type of education is to observe the growth of their children. The growth of their children determines the level of teaching that should be done. A smart child regardless of his or her age is believed to learn faster and explores at every slightest opportunity. In this case, sex education at an early stage is recommended.

To every parents, the education of each child whether formally or informally, should be of utmost interest. No child whether deformed or able bodied should be neglected or denied of sex education. Parents should observe their children. This is because every parent knows his or her child at least at 60% and because of this, a parent should observe his or her child to determine when there is a smart change in his or her behavior as this will give room for investigations and preventions. The investigation will serve as a follow up on how to approach and help the child in issue. For instance in this novel *Agwa Nti*, Adamma's parents observed their child's changes but they never investigated the cause (s) of their daughter's poor performance in academics and lack of interest in domestic activities. This was clearly seen in page 46 as;

N'ulo Adamma ha, o nwezighi ihe o bu
o na-eme nke oma. O megide ihe cheta maka
nwata a na-akpo Chike, o rapu ihe o na-eme
chewe maka ya. Adamma amazighi ihe bu na
nwata akwukwo na-agu akwukwo ya n'ulo.
Maazi Onwudinjo na Oriaku ya bu Obiageli
Amatawala na Adamma ha nwere ugbua abughi
Adamma ha nwere na mbu. Ha matakwaru na ya
bu nwata agawala ajo ije nke mere na o dighi aga
ozi ya nke oma n'ulo. Igu akwukwo ya n'ulo
buzikwara ya nsogbu.

English version: In Adamma's house, there is nothing she does well any longer. Whenever she remembers the name Chike, she will leave everything she is doing and thinks about him. Adamma does not know what it means for a student to read at home. Mr. Onwudinjo and his wife Obiageli knows that the Adamma they have now is not the Adamma they use to have initially. They know that she is being distracted and as such, has been causing her ineffectiveness in the domestic chores. Reading her books has also become a problem for her.

The above was their observation but instead of making investigations to find out the cause of her distractions they only went ahead to ask her about it. Now, the question here is, "as a 'smart' girl that Adamma is, do they really think that she would own up to them"? The answer is No. She would try as much as possible to be as secretive as ever for safety reasons. This in page 46 was stated clearly as;

Otu abali, Maazi Onwudinjo na oriaku ya bu Obiageli
kporo Adamma ka ha mara ebe siri baa n'opi
ugboguru.

... "Ada, anyi aghotaghi gi ugbua, i naghị aga ozi
gi nke oma n'ulo a di ka i na-eme na mbu. Igu
akwukwo gi n'ulo buzijiri gi nsogbu, kedu ihe
na-emenu?"

Her response was; "Nna m, o dighi ihe na-emenu" (Daddy, nothing is happening).

English version: One night, Mr. Onwudinjo and his wife Obiageli called Adamma to find out the reason behind her distractions.

... “Ada, we do not understand you again, you no longer do your house chores the way you usually do. To read your books have become a problem for you, what is happening”?

Even when her mother further questioned her based on her behavior, she pretended to be ignorant of her question. Her mother’s question was; “I gbadokwara anya?” (Are you still attentive?) Obiageli asked her. “Yes mother, I am. There is no problem at all”. After the questioning, her parents never went ahead or further to find out as adults what their daughter was going through because there was clear evidence that something was distracting her and possibly she doesn’t want to disclose it, rather, they gave her a soft landing by allowing her to go.

“Maazi Onwudinjo na oriaku ya bu Obiageli
amazighi ihe ozọ ha ga-ekwu. Ha mepere
onu ha si ya bu nwata, “Ngwanu, gawa”.

English version: Mr. Onwudinjo and his wife Obiageli do not know what else to say, so they told her to go.

This should not only be the way forward for that kind of situation. In this novel, her parents did not make further investigation, they just allowed her to go and that was all. For this case, the way forward should be further investigations since there was a clear indication that she was being distracted. Investigations should be made on the source of the distraction in order to tackle it and avoid disaster.

Consequences of parental negligence of sex education to children in *Agwa Nti*

Adamma most especially, was a victim of parental negligence. Her parents never saw this type of education as a necessary thing for their brilliant daughter. She was denied information and knowledge from her parents as it regards sex education. She was ignorant of sex and its negative implications. She was a victim of the premature sex as a result of misleading advice from her friends. She and her friends were ignorant of what the consequences of premature sex are all about. They only see sex as fun and pleasure without knowing that there are more to it than those mentioned.

Adamma in *Agwa Nti* got unwanted pregnancy from her secondary school, Chike. She and her friends went to his house and after eating and drinking, had sex with Chike, though she didn’t consent to it. She did it under the influence of alcohol, and thus never planned for the pregnancy to occur but this visit to his place would have been avoided if her parents had educated her on the implications of visiting the male counterpart in his house.

Her friends advised her to go for an abortion which she never gave a second thought to before agreeing to it. They approached Chike for money to undergo the abortion. This happened in page 64;

kedu ihe unu chorọ ka m mee?

Chike juru ha.

“Anyi chorọ ka gi nye anyi ego
ka anyi kporọ ya gaa n’ebe a ga-ete
ime ya”. Ebere zara ya.

English version: What do you people want me to do?

Chike asked them.

“We want you to give us money to enable
her go for abortion. Ebere answered him”.

In this novel, the money was not Chike’s problem as he quickly took them home and brought enough money and even accompanied them to the hospital. Despite all these, Adamma’s mother was not aware or did not suspect that her daughter was pregnant. She suspected it, asked her but she outsmarted her by telling her that she was even still a virgin. This was seen in page 61 as thus;

...nke di ka ibe ya, o naghị etata ura n’oge.

Iru oru ulo na-agba ya ngana nke ukwu.

... “Ada m, biko gwa m onye tawara gi ime a?....

Ime? Onye si na m di ime? Adamma jughachiri ya ajuju.
Eziokwu, eziokwu amaara m na i di ime. Biko, o bu onye
tuwara gi ime a i di?

Nne m, amaghi m ihe i na-ekwu. Amaghi m nwoke
obula ma ya foduzie ituta ime. Adamma gwara nne ya. (Pg 61-62)

English version: ... The worst of it all is that she doesn't wake up early.
She always gets tired of doing domestic chores.
Her mother as an adult, has found out that her child
Adamma is pregnant.

One day, Obiageli called her daughter to verify whether
she was accurate of her observations.

My daughter, please tell me, who is responsible for your
pregnancy?...

Pregnancy? Who told you that I am pregnant?
Adamma responded her with a question.

"Of the truth, I know that you are pregnant. Please who
is responsible for this pregnancy that you are carrying?"
Obiageli asked.

Mother, I don't know what you are talking about. I
don't know of any man not to talk of getting pregnant.
(pg 61-62)

This was Adamma's response to her mother.

In this novel, the abortion process did not go well with Adamma. She died during the process.

"Ka obere oge gasiri, Dokinta gbaputara n'ime
uloogwu ahụ n'ike, iyiputa akwa ya nke
juputara n'obara gbanaga.

Chike na ndi enyi Adamma gbabara n'ime ebe
ahụ Dokinta siri gbaputa, hụ Adamma ka o nọ
n'obara.

Adamma! Ha kporo ya. Mgbe ha choputara na ya bu
Nwata ebunaala akwukwo, mkpu na akwa bidoro riwa
ibe ya elu.

English version: After a while, doctor came quickly out to remove his
clothes that were soaked with blood and ran away.

Chike and Adamma's friends rushed inside the place from
where the doctor came out from, and saw Adamma in her
pool of blood.

Adamma! they called her. When they realized that she has
kicked the bucket, shouting and crying started echoing everywhere.

In summary, the consequences of parental negligence on sex education as seen or portrayed in the novel *Agwa Nti* include the following; having opposite sex relationship at a tender age and hiding it from parents in order to belong to the class of big girls, being unnecessarily secretive, distractions in academics and domestic activities, unwanted pregnancy, peer group negative influences, abortion and above all, death.

Suggestions and Conclusions

The novel *Agwa Ntị* exposed the ills of engaging in illicit sex. It also criticizes some ‘weak’ and secretive parents who see no reason for sex education for their children and who after observing negative changes in their children’s behavior do not go ahead to make further investigations to find out causes and source of the change. It is also to be suggested here that there is a cause for every child’s change in behavior and as such, proper investigations and observation should be made earlier enough to counter or stop any consequence that it might bring or cause.

It is also of great importance for parents in various homes to know that total avoidance of teaching their children what they need to know about sex is risky. This is because children tend to learn fast and they might learn from the wrong source. Children are always ready to explore, imitate and learn anything learnable without actually knowing the circumstances of any. Parents should therefore sit up in order to help their children who are of age to know what they really need to know to avoid being misled especially by their peers or people who they see and call their friends. Adolescence is a period of healthy life including sexual life, but many adolescents are less informed about their sexual and reproductive health by their parents.

Training parents for a relatively short period of time can positively impact parents’ knowledge and attitudes about adolescent sexuality. This may have beneficial effects on the childrens’ reproductive health. This falls in line with the fact that sex education teaches children how to recognize abuse and builds respect for their own bodies and talks about boundaries and emotional well-being. By promoting sexual literacy, sex education can contribute to psychosocial development and well-being throughout adolescence and adulthood. The absence of sexual literacy can be the source of many health and social hazards, including STDs and unintended pregnancy.

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