

CHAPTER 12

ROLES OF MOTHER IN THE FAMILY: PROF. AGATHA IJEOMA ONWUEKWE AS A MOTHER AND A ROLE MODEL

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to x-ray the role of mothers in the family: Prof. Agatha Ijeoma Onwuekwe, a mother and a role model. Prof. Agatha Onwuekwe fondly called 'mama' has impacted a lot on her children, students, staff, husband, church, neighbours and relations. Her relationship with them through her dress code, and character, has made her a role model to her mentees and this has also brought her to the limelight among her colleagues. Primary and secondary methods were employed, an oral interview was conducted among her students, children and colleagues, and books, journals, and conference papers were consulted to get first-hand information. In the findings, mama is a role model to her students both at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, as a music teacher she has supervised undergraduates and postgraduate students in compositions, both vocal and instrumental compositions, which has given her an edge as a mother. As a music educator, she has served as an external examiner to various universities outside Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Keywords: Mothers as role models, Mother in the family and Prof. Agatha Onwuekwe.

Introduction

Mothers' role models in their families and place of work cannot be overemphasized, they are special creatures created by God Almighty. The positions and offices occupied by mothers in the families are truly awesome; she is a mother to her children, a daughter to her family, a mother and wife to her husband and also mother to the larger society. Agarwal (1970) states that, "mothers are

often the backbone of the family in the traditional Africa. The African family has always been characterized by strong women who usually held pertinent positions in the family." (p. 75) Mothers are supporters of their family; they care and cherish their families. Nothing is done either secular or sacred without a mother. A father in the family is referred to as the head of the family and the mother is referred to as the neck which assists the head to turn. Prof. Agatha is a strong woman who has occupied different positions both in her family and in academics to move her family, students and colleagues forward and be a role model to them. There is a popular saying "if you train a woman, you train a nation. Iheanacho (2009) defines a mother as,

Every woman who has given birth to a child automatically becomes a mother. Some other women, though not married or when married though without having given birth are called mothers or its variant forms ma, mummy, mum or mom, etc. yet some others earn the sobriquets by reason of their position in organizations like the church (p. 1)

Prof. Agatha is married with children, five boys and a daughter of blessed memory, she is automatically a mother and addressed as a mother, mummy, mom, mum etc. She takes responsibility for being a mother and exhibits the character expected of a mother and people look up to her as a mother and a role model.

Music is part of what makes a woman because it affects the spiritual being of the woman. This agrees with the view of the great literary icon Shakespeare (1971) in Okafor and Okafor (2009) that:

The man that has no music in himself or is not moved with the concord of sweet sound is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils, the motions of his spirit are dull as the night and his reflections as dark as Erebus, let no such man be trusted (p. 9).

Mama is moved by the concord of sweet sound which lifts her spirit to God, that is why she has many compositions to her credit both vocal and instrumental compositions and arrangements to the admiration of her audience. Music inspires and energizes her to put in effort in her family, and workplace, to the progress and growth of her admirers. Ezebube (2014) informs that "music in the life of a woman is a cycle from birth to death therefore, musical practice from childbirth, weaning, puberty, marriage and death are the sole responsibility of a woman." (p. 172) Mothers perform music as soon as a child is born till death, it is a life cycle when a child is born, the child is ushered in with the music. The songs sung by mothers attract attention and pass information that a child is born. All the activities for the growth of the baby to maturity level are ushered in with music and this life cycle has been passed on by mothers from generation to generation, it is a continuous

process in every culture to keep the culture stable and express societal values and heritage. Prof. Agatha has composed songs for children *egwu onwa* to the admiration of women who sing and dance as soon as a child is born.

The role of mothers in the Family: Mama a Role model

Mothers have great roles to play in the family, they play roles to the children, husband, family relations, neighbours, church, etc. Prof. Agatha has played roles to her children, husband, students, staff, daughter inlaws and son-in-law, family relations, neighbours and the church.

Role of Mothers to their children: Mama a Role Model

Children are blessing from God and should not be neglected. With the economic realities on the ground, mothers struggle for the upkeep of their children. Brinley (2001) affirms,

Keep nurturing and loving your children leading them in light and truth. They are the most precious thing you have in the entire world. Among all you possess, nothing is as precious as your children. You will grow old even as I have grown old and when you look around you, you will see the greatest thing to have is the love, confidence and respect of your children (p. 20)

The greatest things to possess are the love, confidence and respect of your children. Children learn songs through rote learning, they sing and familiarize themselves with words, objects and pronunciations. Mothers teach and sing to them the word of God to catch them young. Children live with music; they learn about life through music. Mothers sing to them as soon as they are born and throughout their childhood. Through songs, they learn the norms and values of their people. Agu (1990) agrees that “as a child grows, he learns so many norms and values through music which opens their mind fully to his environment” (P. 50). The environment is where the child finds himself as he or she grows up and through music and culture, he acquaints his environment and learns the norms and values of his community and folk songs appreciated in the community. Oguno and Nwamara (2013) informs that,

The present generation can learn a lot about the past life and values of their community by listening to and taking part in folklore. Through folklore, proverbs could be taught and better appreciated in schools because examples are drawn from the child's immediate environment (p. 116).

Folk music is the music of the community and each piece of folk music has information, lesson, communication, norm and values, and legendry to learn from the songs for the improvement of himself and his environment. Agu (1990) affirms that,

Music serves not only as a medium for entertainment and social relationship but as an intricate part of the development of the mind, body and soul. It is assumed that the laws of the land are learnt through songs and accepted behavioural patterns in the society are assimilated through music and dance (p. 49).

Children learn events faster through music as their mothers sing in their families they try to replicate the songs on their own and abide by the rules and regulations attached to the songs. As a result of this, when the children grow they will not depart from it for the continuation and sustainability of the culture. Brinley (2001) advice mothers to:

- ❖ Give your children a good education
- ❖ Show your children good example by the way you dress and comport yourself
- ❖ Teach them with affection
- ❖ Correct them with tenderness
- ❖ Provide their basic needs, lack of that can lead to crime, drug abuse, violence, disease
- ❖ Understand their unique nature and difference
- ❖ Forgive their mistakes, and don't pamper your children
- ❖ Children should be loved equally

Prof. Agatha, a noble mother apart from her biological children, treats all the students, staff both male and female in the Department of Music both within and outside Nnamdi Azikiwe University as her biological children, ready to assist any staff or students to succeed in their academics both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Her dress code has been a role model to everybody both staff and students. It is worthy of emulation because all parts of her body are well covered, no part of her body is uncovered compared to what is obtainable in today's world in terms of dress code and her students emulate her dress code, especially the female folks. She corrects with tenderness, loves equally and does not pamper anybody. As a teacher, she teaches with affection and tenderness. Some students fondly say “mama is a teacher” ready to teach and supervise at any time.

Prof. Agatha Onwuekwe as an external examiner in the Department of Music at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumnei, Port Harcourt has examined the undergraduate students meticulously and staff and students are happy to tap from her wealth of experience. Furthermore, the postgraduate students under her supervision are not left out of the equal love she exhibits. She loves equity and fair play. Agu (1990) opines that,

The traditional society has provided musical training for its people and the nature, scope and quality of the training are so efficient that the knowledge it offers is enough to lead the gifted, musically inclined and hardworking people including children to create beautiful music with unimagined ease (p. 50).

The training of students in music composition or playing musical instruments for the four years music programme is enough to assist students' creativity and serve as a source of income to assist them in life. Mama encourages the students to excel musically through her guidance in songwriting, instrumental compositions both orchestra and solo compositions, also, teaching theory of music and teaching music education through interactions between teacher and students. Prof. Agatha has a vision for graduate and undergraduate students under her tutelage while they are performing or composing their works to succeed. The poet, Williams Ross states that,

The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world,
mothers keep rocking, and your work will be felt for generations.
Let's work to enthrone motherhood at the centre of our national
priorities and esteem mothering as the greatest contribution a woman
can make in society.

Motherhood is enthroned as the national priority because children are the future generation and the progress of any nation depends on the mindset and creativity of the youths. Students assigned to Prof. Agatha Onwuekwe see her as a role model for choosing and accomplishing their music career in their respective institutions, states and the nation in general. Agordoh (1985) affirms that,

The training of the African child starts right from the cradle with the mother rocking him, singing nonsense syllables to him, the child being carried at the back of the mother to ceremonies, singing to the child and through children's games and stories with interludes of dancing and singing, playing of toy drums until he becomes perfect (p. 13).

Mother and child relationships are interwoven; children learn faster due to their closeness to their mothers. There is a natural bond between mothers and their children. As soon as a child is born, he or she is attached to the mother and the child listens to songs sung by the mother. Children learn everything in their environment through music and this is achieved through observation, imitation and participation. Students observe mama in her style of teaching and supervision and after graduation, imitate her and participate thus both at the primary, secondary and university levels.

The Role of Mothers to their Husbands: Mama as a Role Model

Mothers play a great role in the lives of their husband, he is like their first son, mothers love, respect, care for them, and are submissive even if they are the breadwinner of the family, they assist them as much as they can for the growth and success of the family. Nwankpa (2013) views

music as an "important aspect of the human way of life" (p. 2). Nzewi (2005) agrees that "music makes human, it supervises, explains and illuminates the human society." (p. Viii) Prof. Agatha's love for music shows human concern, supervises and very resourceful controlled the husband's resources in order not to overburden him with unnecessary demands, cherish his principles and provide his meals, buy him gifts, do not encourage him to do evil to meet up with their demands and maintain their marriage relationship. The relationship between her and her husband serves as a role model to other mothers who encourage or assist their spouse to perpetuate evil due to the quest for money. Iheanacho (2009) observes that,

Every bad season of our life is a sowing season, and whatever we sow is what we reap; when the weather changes a woman who disregards her husband because things are no longer the same, may harvest the seeds of hatred when things turn around for him (p. 41).

Since no condition is permanent, mama arrests every situation through prayers, she always remembers that no matter how sad and dark it may be, joy would come in the morning. The love for her husband brought a good relationship and progress in the family, which serves as a role model to other mothers to protect their marriages.

Mother's Role to their Family Relations: Prof. Agatha Onwuekwe a Role Model

Mothers recognize and accept all the members of the family including extended family members, they appreciate mothers-in-law, fathers-in-law, and sons-in-law and the daughter inlaws accept them as biological parents, also her husband's siblings as her biological brothers and sisters. Agordoh (1985) posits that,

Sociologically, people travel from all parts to visit home. It is a time of unity every family tries to put its house in order by settling petty disputes. It is time for mending rent relationships and time for a family reunion. People come together to initiate changes – changes which can bring about the development of their area (p. 15).

Prof. Agatha and her family relations live in peace without segregation, it brought about the development of the family and family reunion. As a mother she ensured peace, and co-existence with her daughters' in-law and son-in-law, respects all her mates in the family and ushered in cheerfulness, all these attributes mended bad relationships, and petty disputes and kept her house in order, to avoid external forces coming in to settle disputes and make the family a laughing stock among the university community.

Mama's Role to her Neighbours: Mama a Role Model

Part of a mama's function is to be friendly with neighbours around her by avoiding, quarrels and

wickedness to anybody. Prudent in everything she does, and keeps a good relationship with neighbours. Agordoh (1985) also affirms that “local communities display traditional dances to show how they pray or worship” (p. 15). Through prayers, mothers attract the good qualities of a neighbour by avoiding gossip, always standing against injustice, contending with whatever she has to avoid jealousy and quarrel in her neighbourhood or communities. She's affectionate to the less privileged, cares for the aged, visits the sick, consoles the bereaved, affectionate to childless women, and visits prisons and orphanages. Slater (2011) observes that "mothers of the world have innate nature as women, whether we have born children or not, mothers reach out to the children who do not have mothers" (p. 7). She makes sacrifices to make people around her happy, it may be small but it goes a long way to touch the heart of the needy to solve his or her problem. Mama does not need to have the whole world to give but only needs a giving heart for charity's sake and this has made her a role model to other women.

Mama as a Committed Christian: Mama a Role Model

It is said that families that pray together, stay together, mama is active in the church, attends women's meetings, cleans the church and supports financially the growth of the church. As a Christian, her life reflects Christ by the way she talks, relates with church members, and confesses Christ without fear or favour. Running from pillar to post looking for miracles has destroyed many mothers because of false prophecy and false prophets sometimes take advantage of the mothers because of their weakness. Many of these modern-day prophets have destroyed many families and marriages and also many mothers have lost their lives because they visited the wrong places in search of miracles as a result of poverty, bareness, sickness, and ignorance. Many of these prophets have succeeded in causing problems in families; mothers against husbands, mothers-in-law, fathers-in-law, sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law. Prof. Agatha (mama) is steadfast in serving God no matter the extent of challenges she faces in her family because God is faithful to take care of all challenges. Mama also resists too many religious gatherings to have enough time for her family, husband, students and staff interaction.

Chukwu (1999) observes that,

Traditional music instigates catalysis and perpetuates physical, verbal and mental clashes in beings. It reduces, inspires, incites and excites. It also demoralizes as well as intimidates. It activates and reactivates gatherings, festivals, and social or political rallies (p. 6).

The place of music in the life of mama cannot be overemphasized. Music inspires, activates and reactivates her to worship God in love and truth and also to relate favourably with her pastors and members of her church. In decision-making, she does not force marital suitors on her late daughter and wives on her sons but only advises them to make the right choice for their good, community

and society. She does not borrow the amount of money she cannot refund to the owner. She is always sincere and open-hearted to her church leaders, and everybody around her remembering that our existence here on earth is just a temporal one and this placed her as a role model to other mothers.

Cleanliness: Mama a Role Model

Cleanliness they say is next to Godliness. Mama keeps the house and environment clean for the good health of her family. She organizes and arranges the home and the compound properly. A decent dress is very important since mothers serve as a role model to their children, especially their girl child, and does not dress above their income to avoid being fashion crazy. Some mothers wallow in ignorance in their search for solutions and satisfaction. Some try to find financial satisfaction in the hands of men who they rely so much upon and feel that without the men, their financial demands will not be fulfilled and some of them meet their Waterloo in the quest for money. Iheanacho (2009) informs that,

A woman whose addiction is material things will also manifest a life that centres on materialism above every other thing. Greed and the primitive acquisition will rule her life. She will be roundly selfish because nothing would seem enough for her. In this state of massive greed, she cannot reason, not even the word of God, to give out (p. 10).

A mother whose interest is in material things, nothing would seem enough for her, and this behaviour will continue to hunt the family, the blessings from God cannot be used for granted. The beauty God endowed on women is to serve God and not take advantage of their beauty to trap innocent men into the dangerous and disastrous net. Prof. Agatha Onwuekwe is not reckoned with this lifestyle, mama has a character which every man, child, student, and staff would emulate and be addressed as mama's mentees and this good behaviour has favoured her family because her children are all doing well.

Conclusion

Mothers are the bedrock of every family, they take care of their husbands, children, relations, neighbours, the church and their environment. Through music education, mama taught her children and students the norms and values of the institutions because students who graduate through her can take up any responsibility either in the nursery, primary, secondary or higher institutions for the sustainability of theory, composition and music education. Mama does not worry because all the things worried about shall be taken away, the only thing that will stand the test of time is the word of God and not all the material things. Mama always advises her mentees to trust in God because our existence here on earth is temporal. Mama is a mother and a role model

for those who come in contact with her because there must be something good to benefit from her relationship with you, therefore, mama should be honoured and emulated as a role model.

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