

The Ironic Portrayal of Absentee Father as a Panacea To Streetism: A Critical Reading of Amma Darko's *Faceless*.

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ABSTRACT

Globally, it is erroneously believed that the role of a father in the home is infinitesimal and inconsequential when compared to the roles played by a mother in the overall development and well-being of children in order to fit well into the society.

This paper however projects and reiterates the significance of a father in bringing up responsible, productive and incorruptible individuals as against the stereotyped notion of fatherhood through the critical reading of Amma Darko's *Faceless* for the serenity and development of the society. Psychoanalytic theory is employed as a tool in analyzing the text and justifying the father factor as a panacea to streetism menace consequent of the behavioral disorders exhibited because of the victim's life experiences. The father figure in the overall development of a child cannot be overemphasized because of its potency to positively or otherwise influence the society.

KEYWORDS: Father, streetism, children, absentee father, society, development, responsibility.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Streetism as a phenomenon is a social menace which results from many factors such as poverty, hunger, child abuse, absentee fathers, ignorance, distorted beliefs and perceptions, irresponsibility and misplaced priorities that in turn affects the development and growth of a society. A society begins with the conglomeration of families as a unit made up of stakeholders that have roles peculiar to them. These roles when sagaciously attended to go a long way in moulding and shaping a less or non corrupt society as Abdulkalam posits; *"If a country is to be corruption free and become a nation of beautiful minds, I strongly feel there are three key societal members who can make a difference. They are the father, the mother and the teacher"*.

Parental roles and responsibilities cannot be overemphasized in building a good and peaceful society.

The issue of parenting positively or negatively affects a child through adulthood. It is believed that when it comes to parenting, mothers, though with exceptions because of finance and some factors are always alive to their responsibilities knowing fully well that sheer irresponsibility on their part results to failure on the children.

In the world today, the percentage of men that are responsible fathers is very low when compared to their female counterpart because many have lost the sense of what fatherhood really entails. Fatherhood which "is a state of being a father" according to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English is not just an act of 'making babies' but of being responsible to the overall development and care of a child.

In the African society, which is solely patriarchal, men are placed above women which is seen as the avenue employed by men to subjugate, oppress and marginalize the female folk; a supposedly 'helpmeet' as planned by God in the creation of the world according to Genesis 2:18, "Then the Lord said, it is not good for the man to live alone, I will make a suitable companion to help him". Women are to complement men as seen in the arrangement of God but it is not uncommon nowadays to see "father" dodge or shelve their responsibilities with the mindset that their wives will assume the roles and shoulder the responsibilities to cater for the children. They do not put into consideration the father-figure charisma and the source of livelihood of such wives. It is not enough to proclaim oneself a father but being engaged, responsible and available. A father is therefore expected to be supportive, and involved in the overall development of a child.

The concept of absentee father is not limited to Africa but a general make-up of any society globally. There is a father absence crisis in the United States of America as revealed by the U.S. Census Bureau that "19.7 million children, more than 1 in 4, live without a father in the home...." This shows that absentee father is a real issue in the United States.

Also in South Africa, the research conducted in the past five years by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and the South African Race Relations Institute (SARRI) found that, "60 Percent of SA children

have absent fathers, and more than 40 percent of South African mothers are single parents, compared with 25 percent in the U.S. and a developed world average of just 15 percent”.

More evident is the difference shown in the percentage of absentee fathers between South Africa and the United States of America. The issue of absentee father should not be taken with levity as a neglect of it constitutes into social ills as a result of streetism.

The Significance of Fatherhood

The state of being a father is charged with enormous task that must not be taken with levity. The role of a father cannot be overemphasized in the structure of a society. He is an important figure in the family unit whose neglect of roles and responsibilities affects the whole system of man beginning from the family unit to the larger society. According to Boba blogs on the importance of dads, the writer opines: “Fathers have a crucial role to play in the cognitive, social and emotional development of their children. An involved father is one who is engaged, available and responsible. He is sensitive and supportive, nurturing and affectionate, and comforting and accepting”. The above assertion reveals the importance of a father to a social system. A man should not just be a ‘father’ but one who is involved in the social, emotional, physical, psychological intellectual and economic wellness of his children.

A father is needed to be the driving force of the family in getting things done not necessarily through coercion but love, patience and understanding. The provision of the basic needs of life that is, food, shelter and clothing does not make a man a father but an involvement in the overall well being of the children. He is expected to be sensitive to his children’s needs in all ramifications and also be available to share in their moments of joy and pain.

As Family First, LLC (2018) says, “The natural order of the family is for the man to have authority (not power) to lead and when that authority is abdicated, a vacuum is created that will certainly be filled elsewhere. That’s when things can go awry”.

A vacuum is created when a father lags in his responsibilities to his children and which will be filled by corrupt people in the street to which they are exposed.

Furthermore, a father’s character and world view should be positive, a type that will shape the personality and character of the children in becoming responsible individuals in the society. An adage says, “charity begins at home” meaning parents serve as practical examples that children emulate to fit well into the society. It is therefore expedient that parents collaborate in bringing up individuals that will not end up on the street, people of questionable character. The family bond should not be disconnected despite odds because when affection turns sour, it degenerates into hatred and enmity which are the basis of streetism and the society bears the brunt.

Causes and Consequences of Absentee Father

According to Stats SA in a newspaper caption, ‘South Africa’s fathers are missing in action’ states; “Almost two-thirds of live births registered last year were done without the detail of the father”. It is a germane issue in which the consequence of the absence of a father is detrimental to the development and sanity of an individual and by extension, the society.

The causes of absentee father therefore can be due to death or sheer irresponsibility as buttressed from the statistics of Stats SA General Household Survey 2016/2017; “...Over 60% of South African kids are in homes without fathers. Ten percent of these households have lost the father due to death and 50% of the fathers are alive but are not present in the lives of their kids”. It is evident from the happenings in the society that the majority cause of absentee father is due to sheer irresponsibility and misplaced priorities. Many cannot sacrifice for the sake of their children but prefer pleasure to their success.

Children who are exposed to a life without a father figure grow up with misplaced anger which statistically reveals that they are more prone to violence and behavioural disorders which constitute a menace to the society.

According to Centre for Disease control, “90% of all homeless and runaway children are from fatherless homes, 85% of all children who show behavioural disorders come from fatherless homes”.

The degradation and corruption found in many societies as a result of social ills can be traced to the factor of absentee father which stem from the various irrational decisions made by individuals because of life unpleasant experiences can be linked to the psychic drives.

Psychoanalytic theory which is a psychological approach in the study of man was proposed by Sigmund Freud, a physician. It projects the distinction between the unconscious and the conscious. Freud believed that the mind is responsible for both conscious and unconscious decisions that are made on the basis of psychic drives.

Psychoanalytic theory according to Business jargons is therefore the personality theory, which is based on the notion that individual gets motivated more by unseen forces that are controlled by the conscious and the

rational thought. Sigmund Freud opines human behavior is formed through an interaction between three components of the mind which are: Id, Ego and Super –Ego.

Id is the primitive part of the mind that seeks immediate gratification of biological or instinctual needs. Id is the unconscious part of the mind, that acts instantaneously without giving much thought to what is right or wrong. It gives an irrational urge to do what is wrong, a force that is behind all the mental forces.

Ego is the logical and the conscious part of the mind associated with the reality principle. It balances the demands of Id and Super-Ego in the context of real life situations. It keeps the Id on check and mediates the conflict between the Id and Super-Ego thus taking decisions in satisfying one's desire without going wrong or committing any unpleasant social behavior. It relates to the way that mind works and the way it affects one's behavior.

Super-Ego is related to the social or the moral values that an individual inculcates as he matures. It acts as an ethical constraint on behavior which helps individual to develop conscience and learn cultural values and norms in order to differentiate between the wrong and the right; a guide on to the right path.

In the fundamental structures of the mind, there will always be a conflict but the ability to balance them defines the way we behave in the external environment.

This theory will be used as a tool in defining the various behavioural patterns exhibited by the characters projected in this study.

Analysis of the Portrayal of Fatherhood in Amma Darko's *Faceless*

Faceless by Amma Darko portrays a social reality of the phenomenon rampant in our society, streetism; an ugly monster that has absorbed vulnerable children on the street. The children are out of the comfort of their homes to be exposed to the dangers resident on the street: "... was the nurturing of another prospective soul into the devouring jaws of the street, a life brought forth for the sake of bringing forth, a hungry mouth created not out of want". P.18

Amma Darko is a prolific writer who demonstrates a total commitment to the portrayal of the ordeals of the female folk in a society filled with prejudice, oppression, subjugation, neglect, cruelty and wickedness. She projects the rotten state of a society that fails to guide and lead her children aright. A society that fails in her obligations to nurture individuals of integrity and repute.

In *Faceless*, as in *The housemaid* another work by the writer, focus is on the children who are neglected to the streets to make a living and learn the skill for survival in the cruel world. *Faceless* in particular showcases the plight of the children like Fofu, Baby T, Odarley and Poison who are pushed to the street as a result of the irresponsibility of their parents which turns a menace that threatens the serenity and development of the society (P.66 and 112).

The writer portrays a father factor in the development of a child for a better society as all the fathers portrayed in *Faceless* have negative impact on their children. The fathers portrayed are irresponsible and do not worth to be called fathers because of lack of involvement in their children's lives.

Two categories of absentee fathers are portrayed in the novel. The first type of fatherhood are fathers who fail in their responsibilities and second, are the fathers with a narrow perception of fatherhood. The categorization was made by the writer through Ms. Kamame, one of the characters who is a guest on 'Good Morning, Ghana show' (GMG), a radio programme anchored by Sylv Po who says:

It is not only the father who refuses to acknowledge or take responsibility for his child, but also the father with a narrow perception of fatherhood, who sees his role as fulfilled so long as he has paid the school fees, placed food on the table and put clothes on the child's back. P. 108

The factor of absence father is germane to the import of the novel by Amma Darko. The writer is of the opinion that though the latter type of fatherhood is partially responsible and it is not likely that his children end up on the street, the rest of his responsibilities that are not financially based are still pending and become a burden on the mother who then performs the tasks of two. The character of Adade whose wife, Kabria is over laboured and performs the tasks of two is an example. The writer Portrays her saying:

The mother, wife, worker and battered car owner that she was, no day passed that Kabria didn't wonder how come the good Lord created a day to be made up of only twenty four hours, because from dawn to dusk, domestic schedules gobbled her up, office duties ate her alive; her three children devoured her with their sometimes realistic and many times very unrealistic demands; while the icing on the cake, their father, needed do no more than simply be her regular husband, and she was in a perpetual quandary. P.10

According to Dfavouredone, he said, "most fathers have forgotten their roles, some thinking providing for the needs of the family is their only responsibility". This submission is further emphasized by Amma Darko in the portrayal of Adade and Onko respectively (pages 14 and 128 – 129).

Most men fail to take responsibility for their children by abandoning the poor mother to cater for their children all by herself while they go about having extra marital affairs, drinking to stupor, being lazy and

jobless. They do not believe in the saying that “it takes two to tangle”. Their perception is to have fulfilled their obligations once the needs of the family is financially settled.

The first category of fatherhood either abscond, never to be seen again while their children question their whereabouts because they are not involved in their world or leaves home and come back when they deem it fit with no impact made. Karabo Motsiri in *The citizen* during one of his interviews with the South Africa’s citizens reveals further:

*It sometimes feels like a “me –too” campaign
When we have conversations about our fathers.
They either don’t know their fathers, their father
raised them until they were two and then he left,
or their fathers are in and out of their lives.*

This statement is confirmed in the pain-filled words of the hairdressing salon owner at Agbogbloshe, the back of whose shop Baby T’s dead body is found. She narrates her plights to Kabria who is there to source for information about Baby T’s death, she says:

*My daughter... Oh!. God!... she is wholly and exclusively my responsibility
Not one cedi do I get from the man who fathered my little girl. The only thing that man ever gave her
was his last name. It cost him not a pesewa....He came and quaffed six free bottles of beer at my expense. Six!
Bought solely from my sweat and toil. After which he did the disappearing act from our lives, never to return
again. P.61*

Fofu, the major character also falls victim of absentee father in her whole life and she further reiterates Karabo Motsiri’s statement saying: “He wasn’t around. He left us a long time ago. Mother said I was still not even born”. P.100

Her father, Kwei leaves home as a result of two superstitious beliefs that Maa Tsuru, Fofu’s mother and his wife is an accursed which is evident in her being too fertile: “Everything could be blamed on the curse...Maa Tsuru was too fertile, and it was a curses. It was the curse that made her pick seed whenever he touched her”. P. 126.

The second belief is about the birth of the fifth child in his family. It is believed that bringing forth the fifth child in Kwei’s family brings calamity upon the family. Kwei is always in and out of his immediate family’s life until Fofu comes into the picture. Fofu being the fourth child and still in the womb makes his father leave home and never to surface again. Kwei’s mother encourages his son’s irresponsibility by urging him: “Twice in the past, I woke up in the morning and you were gone. This time, it is I asking you to go. Go! Kwei, go! Go far away from here. The number ‘five’ has always been in conflict with the spirit of this of this family”. P.126

Kwei’s thought about his mother’s advice is revealed thus: “He had bedeviled his family enough through mixing blood four whole times with Maa Tsuru. Five times would be provoking the spirits of his family” P.126.

Baby T, Fofu’s sister is another character who experiences the absence of a father in a bitter way: “Kwei and Maa Tsuru’s first daughter, but third child, who was born during Kwei’s unceremonious absence, was never honoured with a Kwei family name at birth” P.125.

If Kwei is really a father, no superstitious belief should be able to separate him from his family which results in the children being thrown to the street.

It has also been proved from a study by Laura Oloyede that children within wedlock are less likely to experience absentee fathers Margaret Mwantok in the *Guardian* (Nigeria) 2017 Projected this: “Compared to children born within Marriage, children born to cohabiting parents are three times as likely to experience father absence, and children born to unmarried, non-cohabiting parents are four times as likely to live in a father absent home”.

This assertion is proven in Amma Darko’s *Faceless* as Maa Tsuru is not properly married to Kwei and they do not cohabit: “Their living arrangement was however, more in line with the status of their relationship. Yet Maa Tsuru got into performing other duties for Kwei as if they were a properly married couple”. P.120-121

Furthermore, Naa Yomo, Maa Tsuru’s aunt makes it more revealing:

It is bad enough that he has a son with you, and yet is obstinately avoiding questions about marriage rules and making you his wife properly. But you providing him with all the services of a wife so free of charge, is really rubbing in the salt. P,121.

It is therefore evident that Kwei and Maa Tsuru are non-cohabitant as portrayed in the novel: “Maa Tsuru continued to live in the family home and Kwei went back to living with his mother in their family home” P.120

Kwei probably may not have abandoned his family if he is properly married and has perceived fatherhood as a commitment.

The Father Factor and Streetism in Amma Darko's *Faceless*

Fatherhood is a state that calls for total commitment to one's responsibilities as a father. A father's role cannot be undermined while the neglect of such roles has negative impacts on the children who are always at the receiving end of a family broken cord.

Justifications for absentee fathers are many but the repercussions are also numerous on the children. In order to prevent a corrupt society which results from children being thrown to the street, fathers must be alive to their responsibilities by meeting the needs of the children in all areas of life.

The almajiris in the northern part of Nigeria and children found on the street in the major cities of the country are typical examples of the children showcased in Amma Darko's *Faceless*.

These children are exposed to physical, sociological, emotional, psychological and economical challenges. These children live on the street and fend for themselves to make a living and are always at the mercy of the society. Maa Tsuru's children and Odarley, Fofu's friend are good examples from the work of Amma Darko (P.2).

These street children are also faced with dangers on the street especially, the female ones among them ranging from assault, rape, unwanted pregnancy, brutality, diseases to death. (P.170).

Fofu is at the verge of being raped by Poison, the street lord as portrayed by the writer:

She was smiling still in her dream... when she felt the light pressure on her breasts under the weight of a pair of hands... she felt a squeeze, which jolted her very rudely into full awakening ... someone was kneeling over her... It was a man. She stiffened, closed her eyes again and remained still. P.3.

Her sister, Baby T is found dead on the street because of parental neglect. Her body is found behind a blue rasta hairdressing kiosk salon at Agbogbloshe. And according to a market woman in a discussion with Kabria says; "Her face was so mutilated... and her head ... ah! That too was completely shaven". P.42.

This statement reveals the extent of damage done on Baby T's dead body to show how dangerous the street is for those children.

The height of danger on the street is further affirmed by a male nurse who has gotten accustomed to the rate of dead bodies brought daily to the morgue when Aggie and Vickie; representatives of MUTE are at the mortuary for Baby T's autopsy report:

Honestly, whoever the dead street girl is, must be very lucky to have two fine women like you come here to find out what killed her. God knows how many bodies are cut up each day the causes whose of death show clear signs of murder... P. 149.

Children should not be pushed to the street to look after themselves. In fact, it is child abuse to let young children into the street to make a living; a typical example of Maa Tsuru's children. The misconception about fatherhood generates into streetism which brings about societal ills.

Research therefore shows that when a child is raised in a father absent home, he or she is affected in the following ways:

The Father Factor and Childhood Poverty

Most children with absentee fathers live impoverished lives because their mothers now have double responsibilities with low source of income. The mothers strive to put food on their table, which may not be too easy and convenient. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2012) says; "children living without their father in the home are 47% more likely to live in poverty" which is true of all the street children portrayed in the novel.

Fofu in her conversation with Odarley, her friend reveals the level of poverty she battles with by telling Odarley that she knows the shape of poverty, sees poverty from head to toe and also smells poverty. She describes it saying, "Head to toe. It's face; it's ugly square head; it's big fat toes, I know its shape like..." P. 27. The level of poverty of her family as a result of her father's absence is portrayed because he is not there to work and make life worthwhile for his children.

The likes of Kwei and Kpakpo in *Faceless* are examples of lazy fathers who could not provide for their family hence, the impoverished state that pushed Kwei's children to the street because Maa Tsuru is engaged in a job that is not lucrative enough to take proper care of her children; she strives to make ends meet. It is not until a man amasses wealth that he will be responsible, the little he has could be judiciously used to take care of the family. A father therefore should not be lazy and irresponsible. If a man is hardworking though with a low-paying job, loving and responsible, a woman will be willing to lend a helping hand in looking after the family in her own little way. An instance is of Maa Tsuru and her children who engage in menial jobs to meet the needs of the family. Maa Tsuru works for her aunt, the older boys run errands at the seaside and the fish market while the girls, Baby T and Fofu perform petty chores for family members in exchange for food leftovers and old clothes. (P. 127). The basic needs of life: good shelter, food and clothing are not met by their father who is not involved in their lives' development.

In the same vein, poverty also prevents Fofo and Baby T from completing their education. Fofo and Baby T drop out of school in class two because of lack of money to buy uniforms and exercise books. According to the National Principals Association Report on the state of High Schools, “Seventy-one percent(71%) of high school drop outs come from fatherless homes” This could be affirmed in the words of Fofo when she is being interviewed at MUTE; “... but I went only up to Class Two. There was no money. Mother couldn’t afford the uniforms and the exercise books” P.100.

Fofo’s reaction to her academic /educational failure is of indifference because she is aware that there is no money to sponsor her and Baby T in school but getting food to eat is more pressing, the reason she goes to the street to beg which later translates into social ills like pick pocketing, drinking of alcohol and sexual immorality.

The Father Factor and Child Psychological Well-Being

Children with absentee fathers experience psychological problems in their development. They are usually depressed and frustrated because of the intrusion into their minds which determines the kind of behavioural pattern exhibited. Sarkadi, A. et al (2008) posit that children with involved fathers do not have much mental problems exhibiting vices. They said, “Boys have fewer behavior problems and girls have fewer psychological problems when they have involved dads.”

Street children in the novel are portrayed as ‘not normal’ because of their disposition to life. They act according to the dictate of their minds, (Id) regardless of the aftermath on the society. A woman in the Agboghloshie market comments on the boxing bout between two muscular heavy duty porters; “Big muscles, tiny brains. Can we normal ones ever understand these street people?” P. 43.

Fofo is also rude to an elderly woman because of frustration. She reacts negatively without giving much thought on the cultural values of the society: “I had a very bad dream last night. That is normality with me. But today, having set eyes on your 50-80-50 shape, I am sure to have the nightmare of a good dream” P.28.

On the contrary, Adade’s children do not pass through psychological stress like the children on the street with absentee fathers because they do not have a feeling of neglect which results into anger making them behave in an irrational manner as experienced by Poison, Fofo and other street children.

According to SAARI, the involvement of a father is reinforced and can go a long way in building up emotionally stable individuals with proper mental development: “the presence of a father can contribute to cognitive development, intellectual functioning, and school achievement. Children growing up without fathers are more likely to experience emotional disturbances and depression”.

The involvement of a father in a child’s life cannot be undermined because the negative effects it has on the mind of an individual cannot be quantified hence, the exhibition of behavioural disorder.

The Generational Impact of Father Absence

The factor of absentee father has a great generational impact on the society which should be discouraged. It is believed history always repeat itself through the generations in that there is every tendency that children experience what came to play in their parents’ lives. Pougnet, E. et al (2012) project, “Women with absent fathers are more likely to have children with absent fathers” Such is the case of Maa Tsuru who is seen as an accursed because of the pain and neglect her mother goes through during pregnancy and child birth. Maa Tsuru’s father denied the pregnancy and abandoned her mother at the crucial period of her life. As the pregnancy advances, her anger for her lover turned into hatred and on the day of delivery in her pain and dying state, places a curse on her lover and his descendants. The psychological trauma she goes through is the force behind the action of raining a generational curse on his lover and his descendants: “... , when Tsuru’s mother picked seed with her, the young man responsible, that is Tsuru’s father, denied the pregnancy. Worse still, he insisted he had never even seen Tsuru’s mother ever in his life”. P. 92.

The curse on Maa Tsuru is seen as a factor that affects her marital life since she is a descendant of the irresponsible young man in question: “The cord was still uncut when she yelled lasting curses on her lover and his descendants after him, to suffer in more ways and in more forms than he had made her suffer” P. 93. Maa Tsuru grows up to be in a relationship that results in the birth of four children with an absentee father. History repeats itself in her husband, Kwei, an absentee father who is never involved in the care and development of his children.

The Father Factor in Adolescence and Crime

Fathers are to be involved in their children’s growth and development following the stages. An adolescence stage is a stage when children become conscious of themselves as a result of the physical, psychological and emotional changes that occur in their lives.

It is really a time for a father to be very close to his children in order to guide them through the stage as Allen & Lo (2012) posit that, “Adolescent/Teen boys who live with their dads are less likely to carry gun and

deal drugs". A father's presence is crucial to preventing adolescent from exhibiting bad traits . Cobb-Clark and Tekin (2014) further affirm that "Boys growing up in absent father households are more likely to display 'hypermasculine' behavior, including aggression, antisocial behavior and delinquency".

The assertions are portrayed as true by Amma Darko in her work among children living in Sodom and Gomorrah. It is a place that inhabits street children who are not beneficiaries of parental care and guidance. They live according to their instincts' dictates and are less bothered about core values. They live recklessly by engaging in social vices as confirmed by a woman coming behind Fofu and Odarley, who after listening to their conversations concludes that Fofu must be high on something by saying, "Drugs after all, flow freely at Sodom and Gomorrah".P.27.

Poison, the street lord because of the absence of a father behaves unruly and is most feared by the people in the society. Naa Yomo reveals this on Poison's visit to Maa Tsuru saying, "... He came here. To her . Evil man. Very evil. And because he came to her, nobody wants to have anything to do with her" P. 89. He engages in theft, rape, brutality, promiscuity and assaults as a means of unleashing his pain and anger on the society. (P.170).

Macho, another character is a bully who robs other street children of their hard earned money.(P.8).

All these antisocial behaviours are the aftermath of the irrational decisions made by the characters portrayed as a result of the psychological trauma they go through because of the absence of a father in their lives; which make them belong to the street.

The Father Factor in Child Abuse

The absence of a father contributes to child abuse and maltreatment. According to CPS, "The absence of a biological father contributes to increased risk of child maltreatment". Children from absentee father homes especially, biological father suffer and are maltreated either by a mother who sees the act as an avenue to transfer her aggression of having an irresponsible husband on the children by punishing the latter and also as a way of pleasing a new lover or as a means employed by a step father who sees such children as threats. Different measures of inhumane acts are levied on such children such as hunger, beating, child labour, rape and so on which make such children run into the street in search of love, liberty and succor.

Poison suffers abuse from his step father and runs away from home to the street at a tender age of eight. Though shy and very soft spoken, his step father delights in beating him which results into him being covered from head to toe in scars (P.169).

Fofu also starts living on the street at age fourteen because of the absence of her biological father. She and her siblings will have to work for other people on the street before they could feed at tender ages (P.127). They are exposed to child labour in order to fend for the family. The author reveals this about Maa Tsuru and her children; "She never stayed on one job for long because her two sons kept them going with the money and free, fish they brought in daily from the seaside and the fish market. Fofu and Baby T. were also bringing home money from the streets". P. 129.

Fofu and her siblings especially the boys have to leave home for the street when Kpakpo comes into their lives unexpectedly. They are not comfortable living with their step father who lives on their daily earnings. If Kwei were to be available and responsible, his children would not have been pushed to the street.

Apart from child labour, Baby T is also sexually abused by Kpakpo, her step father and Onko (uncle), a relative .(P.133, 136-137).

In the same vein, Odarley, Fofu's friend on the street is sent out by her mother because of her love for another man and as a transfer of aggression. Fofu comments, "She didn't leave home. She was sacked. By her own mother... she didn't just want Odarley around after Odarley's father left her for another woman and she too found another man". P. 103.

The anguish father absence unleash on children is enormous and should be taken seriously so that the issue of child abuse can be eradicated in our society.

The Father Factor in Risky Behavior

In father involved homes, girls are likely to have higher self-esteem, lower levels of risky sexual behavior and fewer difficulties in forming and maintaining romantic relationships later in life while boys are level-headed , well behaved and responsible. According to Green, B. et al (2014), "Daughters are less likely to engage in risky sexual behavior when they have consistent contact and a sense of closeness with their dads". A father figure is very important in bringing about chastity among children and youth and in producing responsible individuals in the society.

The society today is completely overwhelmed by sexually active children before they reach maturity and if not properly guided and cared for, they become victims of irrational urge to engage in vices. The importance of a father is reiterated by The Department of Health and Human Services that, "71% of pregnant teens have no dad present in their life. Most teenage girls that are sexually active are looking for something far

deeper than what their hormones are screaming”. These children need love, care and a sense of identity with their fathers. For instance, the children at Sodom and Gomorrah in *Faceless* are helpless because of the absence of parental guide. They see themselves as being abandoned and hated thus, they seek succor from the street in form of sexual perversion. They tend to engage in risky sexual behaviours which may lead to contracting diseases, unwanted pregnancy or even death. Also, Maa Tsuru does not have an involved dad to guide which makes her enter into a wrong relationship that later results into absentee father for her children.

Poison’s sex workers and Baby T are victims of uninvolved fathers which results into risky sexual behaviours and invariably, the death of Baby T. (P. 173-175, 197). Due to the absence of a father, they do not know how to interact with the opposite sex but get themselves granting their instinctive needs thereby destroying their lives. The social ills engaged on the street serves as a ‘fight-back’ action in showing their anger and releasing their pent up emotions on the society which are not so desirable.

II. CONCLUSION

The father factor in the development of a child cannot be overemphasized. A father’s input is craved for in all areas of a child’s development so as to become responsible individuals that will fit well into the society

The author projects the need to educate and motivate fathers to rise up to their responsibilities on behalf of their children and not to condemn them for their actions though the fathers in novel are all portrayed in the negative light.

There may be justifications for men to be absentee fathers but it is also necessary to put into consideration the aftermath of neglect of responsibilities in that the consequences can last for generations which is detrimental to the development of a society.

It is therefore, a call on the fathers that their children do look up to them to be available in their overall development and that a neglect of such responsibilities have psychological effects on them which make them loose sense of developing ethical constraints in terms of conscience to behave in an acceptable manner in the society.

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