

The relationship between okonkwo and nwoye falls apart

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The Relationship between Okonkwo and Nwoye falls apart. A relationship between a father and son can have a decidedly profound impact on each other's lives. Whether this relationship is bifurcated, the psychological effects of having an intimate or inadequate parenting skills can have a nurturing or depriving effect on a child's personality from birth all throughout adulthood. This relationship although sustained has the potential to be either beneficial or untenable. In *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, we see a breakdown between a father and son relationship which created a very detrimental effect.

The carved figure of a son that Okonkwo had predicted was erased due to his egoistic character and his terrible parenting skills. I can recall an incident, where one of my closest friends had a extremely unstable and difficult relationship with his father. He told me that his father would put on a public display, praising him in front of his family and friends but behind closed doors, he would insult him. These insults were so hurtful that my best friend described them to me as land mines.

The consequences of these hurtful land mines left mental scares that resulted in a schism, where the relationship between father and son became untenable. This also led to an emotional collapse with his father causing irreprehensible damage that affected and impacted his life today. The most prominent and compelling theme in the novel originates from the main character Okonkwo, and his ongoing battle to be different from his father. Okonkwo's father had a negative impact his son's life, which resulted in Okonkwo trying to constantly stay away from his father's character.

The happiness of a family depends on a strong and successful partnership among its members. It is often said, that a father-son relationship is one of the most valuable relationships that exist, and it should be extremely balanced. In any family structure, when a father and son relationship diminishes, the psychological consequences it creates cause a ripple effect. This ripple effect can cause considerable conflict and cause breaches, breakdown and discontinuity within the family structure.

According to Achebe, the main character detested his father at a very young age, " Even as a little boy he had resented his father's failure and weakness, and even now he still remembered how he had suffered when a playmate had told him that his father was *agbala*. "(28) The Igbo tribe in *Things Fall Apart* uses the term an " *agbala*" which is used to describe " woman". Okonkwo considered his father to be weak, effeminate, poor, disgraceful, and always in debt to his fellow tribes people. Okonkwo's life revolves around the deep fear of becoming a failure and adopting the image of his father.

Due to this self-rooted perception of failure there are indications that he tries to rise above his father's legacy. The breakdown of Okonkwo's relationship with his son is evident throughout this novel. The reason for this tumultuous relationship is, Okonkwo is too engrossed in maintaining his status quo, and his relationship was governed by his own beliefs, principles and his own " right way to do right things". He treated his family very strictly as he believed that showing affection revealed a sign of social weakness; thus the

disheartening lack of respect and love was a malnourishing factor within the family.

This story maintained a constant theme of conflict. Nwoye, lives in perpetual fear of his father. Okonkwo constantly chastises his son and finds a fault with everything he does. He remains consistent in threatening his son and does not hesitate to abuse him. For example, when he is teaching Nwoye and Ikemefuna to manage seed-yams, he threatens Nwoye with physical abuse if he does not cut up the yams properly: "If you split another yam of this size, I shall break your jaw." (Achebe 59). This is not a healthy way for a father to discipline his son.

Whether corporal punishment was accepted in the Ibo culture or not, Okonkwo's verbal and physical abuse weakened the relationship with Nwoye until he left for the missionaries. Although Okonkwo seems to want what was best for his son Nwoye, to prosper as a real man, I believe that it is immoral to impose control using violence. Okonkwo has a tunnel vision when it comes to parenthood, and this inevitably led to him disgracing his son and making mistakes just as his own father did. "I will not have a son who cannot hold his head in the gathering of the clan.

I would sooner struggle him with my own hands. And if you stand staring at me like that," he swore, "Amadiora will break your head for you!" (Achebe 60). This iterates the brutal way that Okonkwo treated his son. This incident shows the apparent faults in Okonkwo's parenting skill as well as reflects his own weakness. In the story there was also an atrocious and tragic incident where Okonkwo killed his adopted son Ikemefuna. He was in a dilemma at a

point in time but it all drew up in him murdering an innocent kid who calls him "father".

Because of this action his biological son grew a tinge of anger and hatred towards him. Even though they were really no relation, Nwoye thought of his Ikemefuna as a brother. He did not love his children enough or show them compassion. There is no uniformity in the father-son relationship. Although Okonkwo feels he is doing the right thing in raising Nwoye, his harsh treatment drives his son further away from him. "At any rate, that was how it looked to his father, and he sought to correct him by constant nagging and beating.

And so Nwoye was developing into a sad-faced youth" (Achebe 16). Nwoye felt no love or attention from his father. It is, therefore, no surprise that Nwoye left the tribe and converted to the "white man's" religion, Christianity. He did this in an effort to seek answers to his troubling questions about Okonkwo and the other members in his society. This downfall in Nwoye's relationship with Okonkwo encouraged him to follow the missionaries. This naive and amiable child struggled in the shadow of his powerful and demanding father.

Nwoye's relationship with his father progressively deteriorates because he is unable to put up with his father's dictatorial attitude as well as there is a lack of understanding between each other. He was supportive of the new religion as it gave a sense of comfort. If he did not express inhumane, brutal threatening to kill his son, Nwoye would not have run away, but rather, enjoyed an improved relationship. By further analyzing this story it can be

seen that he is alienated from traditions and beliefs from the tribe. Okonkwo death came just as Nwoye was becoming aware of his role within the culture and becoming more aware of his self. Basically Okonkwo failed in his mission in raising his son in the right way and comprehends that he has pushed his son to his fate and becomes bitter. It is his fault that he lost a son. His rejection of his father's way of life creates an ironic parallel rejection of his own son. Comprehending the importance of fatherhood, allows one to recognize the powerful influence of personal experiences and how they directly or indirectly affect others. Works Cited Achebe, Chinua. Things Fall Apart. New York: Anchor Books, 2010. E-book.