

A STUDY OF PEACE AND JUSTICE IN SELECTED ARABIC POEMS IN OFFA, NIGERIA

By

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Abstract

Literature has long served as a medium for reflecting societal realities and advancing moral and social consciousness. In African societies, poetry occupies a central role in addressing communal concerns such as peace, justice, equity, and ethical responsibility. In contemporary Nigeria, persistent challenges including injustice, social inequality, and communal tension underscore the relevance of literary interventions that promote peaceful coexistence. Despite growing scholarship on Nigerian poetry, indigenous and regional Arabic poetic voices, particularly from Offa, Kwara State, remain underexplored. This study is therefore justified by the need to foreground local poetic expressions and examine their contribution to peace and justice discourse. The aim of this study is to analyze the representation of peace and justice in selected Arabic poems by Abubakri Agbaje and Abdulrahman Wuraola. The specific objectives are to identify dominant themes of peace and justice in the poems, examine the poets' stylistic and thematic approaches, and assess poetry's role as a tool for social engagement and moral advocacy. Adopting a qualitative literary-descriptive methodology, the study employs close textual and thematic analysis of purposively selected poems. The analysis is guided by thematic criticism and social realism to situate the poems within their socio-cultural context. Findings reveal that peace and justice are central and interdependent themes, with peace portrayed as communal harmony sustained by justice, dialogue, and moral accountability. The poets use poetry as a non-violent medium for social critique, ethical instruction, and consciousness-raising. The study recommends increased documentation of indigenous poetry, expanded scholarly engagement with local

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Arabic poets, and the integration of peace-oriented literary texts into educational and community-based peacebuilding initiatives.

Keywords: Peace; Justice; Poetry; Literary Analysis; Offa

Introduction

Literature has consistently functioned as a mirror of society, reflecting human experiences, social realities and collective aspirations. Across cultures and historical periods, writers have used literary forms to interrogate social conditions, preserve cultural values and inspire change. In African societies, poetry occupies a particularly significant position, as it is deeply rooted in oral traditions and communal life. African poetry often serves not only as a form of artistic expression but also as a means of social engagement, moral instruction and cultural preservation. Through poetry, poets address issues such as peace, justice, conflict, inequality and social harmony, thereby contributing to societal awareness and transformation.

In contemporary Nigerian society, the themes of peace and justice remain highly relevant due to persistent social, political and economic challenges. Issues such as ethnic tensions, social inequality, injustice and conflict have continued to affect communal relationships and national stability. Nigerian poets have responded to these realities by using poetry as a platform for critique, advocacy and moral reflection. Their works often interrogate the causes of social unrest, condemn injustice and promote ideals of fairness, reconciliation and peaceful coexistence. As such, poetry functions as both a creative and ideological tool for addressing societal concerns and fostering dialogue.

Offa, a historic town in Kwara State, Nigeria, is renowned for its rich cultural heritage and intellectual traditions. The town has produced several literary figures whose works are informed by local history, cultural practices, and social realities. Poets from Offa frequently draw inspiration from their immediate environment, employing poetry to engage with communal values, ethical responsibilities and social challenges. Their poems often reflect the lived experiences of the people, addressing issues of peace, justice, leadership and moral conduct within the society. Consequently, Offa poetry provides a valuable lens through which the interaction between literature and society can be examined.

This study undertakes an analytical examination of peace and justice as reflected in selected poems from Offa, Nigeria. The research focuses on two poets from Offa - Abubakar Ahmad Agbaje and Abdullahi Wuraola - whose poetic works demonstrate

a strong engagement with themes of peace, justice and social responsibility. These poets are selected due to the thematic relevance of their poems and their contribution to the literary expression of social concerns within the Offa community. Through their use of imagery, symbolism, language and cultural references, Agbaje and Wuraola articulate societal tensions, critique injustice and advocate harmonious coexistence.

By analyzing selected poems by these two poets, the study seeks to explore how poetry serves as a medium for expressing communal values and addressing social challenges. The study also examines how cultural context, historical experiences and contemporary realities influence the poets' representation of peace and justice. Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to African literary scholarship by highlighting the significance of indigenous poetic voices in peacebuilding and justice advocacy. It further underscores the enduring relevance of poetry as a tool for social consciousness, ethical reflection and sustainable community development in Nigerian society.

Literature Review

The authors examine scholarly works related to peace, justice and their representation in poetry. They also outline the theoretical frameworks used in this study and situates the research within existing scholarship on African and Nigerian poetry.

Conceptualisation of the study

a. Peace

Peace has been conceptualized in varied terms across disciplines. At its most basic level, peace is understood as the absence of violence and conflict (Galtung, 1969). However, scholars have expanded this definition to include positive dimensions such as social harmony, justice and well-being. Negative peace refers to the absence of direct physical conflict, while positive peace encompasses structural and cultural conditions that foster human dignity and social equity (Johansen, 2008). In African contexts, peace is often tied to communal values such as unity, respect and ubuntu - an ethic that emphasizes human interconnectedness and mutual responsibility (Ramose, 1999). Within literary discourse, peace is frequently depicted not merely as a condition to be achieved but as an aspirational ideal that reflects ethical commitments and moral imagination.

In the context of poetry, peace is not only a theme but also a moral and ethical appeal articulated through language, imagery and symbolism. Poets evoke peace as a value to be defended and practiced within society - especially in contexts marked by injustice, conflict and social fragmentation.

b. Justice

Justice broadly denotes fairness, equality and the proper ordering of social relations. Philosophers like Rawls (1971) define justice as fairness in the distribution of rights, opportunities and resources, whereas others emphasize corrective or restorative processes that address wrongs and restore broken relationships (Braithwaite, 2002). In many African societies, justice is deeply embedded in communal and relational ethics, where wrongs are addressed through dialogue, reconciliation and restorative practices rather than punitive isolation (Mamdani, 1996).

In literature, justice often emerges as a response to social wrongs and ethical breaches. Poets articulate justice through critique, protest and moral insight, using language to expose inequity, critique abuse of power and reimagine fair social orders. Poetry thus becomes a verbal space for contesting injustice and imagining alternative social realities.

c. Relationship Between Peace and Justice

While peace and justice are conceptually distinct, they are closely interrelated. Johan Galtung's foundational framework distinguishes negative peace (absence of violence) from positive peace (presence of social justice and equality) (Galtung, 1969). Positive peace cannot be sustained without justice, as injustice - whether structural, economic, or political - creates conditions for conflict. Conversely, justice that ignores the need for peaceful coexistence may yield punitive systems that perpetuate resentment rather than reconciliation. Thus, peace and justice are mutually reinforcing conditions: genuine peace is rooted in justice and justice is meaningful only in peaceful contexts.

In the context of poetry, this relationship is often explored through the juxtaposition of conflict and resolution, suffering and healing, and critique and affirmation. Poets highlight that justice must underpin peace if societies are to overcome deep-rooted divisions and foster communal harmony.

Theoretical Framework

Thematic criticism foregrounds the ideas and concepts conveyed in literary texts. It examines how themes emerge, evolve and interact within a text to construct meaning (Fisher, 2016). In this study, thematic criticism is employed to analyze how the selected poems articulate peace and justice. The approach highlights recurring motifs such as reconciliation, equity, moral responsibility and communal harmony, illuminating how these themes are embedded in language, imagery and poetic structure.

Social realism is a literary theory grounded in the representation of real social conditions and lived experiences (Williams, 1977). It emphasizes literature's role in portraying societal inequities and injustices with fidelity and critique. In African literature, social realism has been central to postcolonial writing, where artists depict colonial legacies, socio-economic disparities and struggles for dignity (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986). This framework enables the present study to situate the poets' works within the socio-cultural realities of Offa, Nigeria, analyzing how lived experiences of injustice and aspirations for peace shape poetic expression.

Literature as social engagement posits that literary works are not autonomous aesthetic objects but rather active participants in social discourse and transformation (Eagleton, 1983). This theoretical stance aligns with African literary traditions, where poetry is integrated into social rituals, political struggles and community life. By framing poetry as social engagement, this study recognizes the poets from Offa as cultural agents whose work responds to communal conditions and invites readers to reflect critically on issues of peace and justice.

Review of Related Studies

African literary criticism has consistently emphasized the social responsibility of literature, particularly poetry, as a medium for engaging with societal realities. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) asserts that African writers bear the responsibility of confronting socio-political injustices and contributing to the decolonization of the African mind. This view positions literature as an ideological tool capable of challenging oppressive structures and restoring cultural consciousness. Similarly, Osundare (2002) conceptualizes poetry as a vehicle of social conscience, arguing that it educates, mobilizes resistance, and fosters collective identity. These critical perspectives underscore poetry's role in bearing witness to injustice, promoting ethical values, and imagining more just and humane social orders.

Within the Nigerian context, several scholars have examined poetry as a site of justice discourse and social criticism. Ojaide (1996) highlights how Nigerian poets interrogate political corruption, economic inequality, and violations of human rights, employing poetic language to challenge dominant power structures. Aiyejina (1990) further observes that Nigerian poets often root their visions of justice in indigenous cultural memory, communal ethics, and moral philosophy. These studies demonstrate that Nigerian poetry is deeply invested in social engagement and public moral reflection rather than aesthetic detachment.

In addition to English-language literary scholarship, Arabic and Arabic-Islamic literary studies in Nigeria have also contributed significantly to discussions on justice, peace, and moral responsibility. Scholars such as AbdulRahman Al-Ilori (1982) emphasize the didactic and ethical functions of Arabic poetry, particularly in promoting justice (*'adl*), peace (*salām*), and social harmony within Muslim communities. Similarly, AbdulGaniyy (1997) notes that Nigerian Arabic poets often employ poetry as a medium for moral reform, conflict resolution, and communal guidance, drawing heavily on Islamic ethical principles. Studies by Jimoh (2010) and Balogun (2015) further reveal that Arabic poetry in Nigeria frequently addresses social injustice, leadership failure, and moral decay, presenting justice as a prerequisite for peaceful coexistence. These works highlight the parallel traditions of social commitment in both Arabic and English poetic expressions in Nigeria.

Despite the richness of existing scholarship, notable gaps remain. Much of African and Nigerian literary criticism has focused on canonical poets and major cultural centers, with limited attention given to indigenous and regional poetic voices such as those from Offa, Kwara State. Furthermore, while peace and justice are often discussed as separate themes, few studies examine their interconnectedness within localized poetic expressions. Additionally, Arabic poetic contributions from specific Nigerian communities are frequently marginalized in mainstream literary discourse. This study addresses these gaps by examining selected poems from Offa, analyzing how local poets articulate peace and justice within their specific cultural and socio-historical contexts.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research methodology to examine how themes of peace and justice are represented in selected poems from Offa, Nigeria. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the research focuses on interpretation,

understanding and critical analysis of literary texts rather than numerical data or statistical evaluation. It allows for in-depth exploration of thematic patterns, stylistic features and socio-cultural contexts that underpin the poets' works, making it particularly suitable for literary and cultural analysis. The research adopts a literary-descriptive design, emphasizing close reading and detailed textual examination. This approach enables the researcher to describe, interpret and evaluate the selected poems in relation to the themes of peace and justice. The design is non-experimental and relies on existing literary texts as primary sources, with the aim of revealing underlying ideas, moral perspectives and societal concerns conveyed through poetic language. By situating the poems within both literary and socio-cultural contexts, the study seeks to understand how poetry reflects and engages with the realities of Offa society.

The population of the study consists of poems produced by poets from Offa, Kwara State, Nigeria, a town known for its rich literary and cultural traditions. Given the broad range of poetic works available, the study is limited to poems that explicitly explore peace, justice, social equity, conflict resolution and communal moral values. The sample comprises selected poems by Abubakar Ahmad Agbaje and Abdullahi Wuraola, two prominent contemporary poets from Offa whose works strongly reflect the themes of interest. A purposive sampling technique is employed to select both the poets and their relevant poems, ensuring that the materials analyzed are rich in thematic content and representative of the study's objectives. This sampling method allows the research to focus on texts that provide meaningful insights into the conceptualization of peace and justice within the local context.

Data for the study are drawn from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data consist of the selected poems, which serve as the main texts for analysis, offering direct evidence of how the poets address issues of peace and justice. Secondary sources include scholarly books, journal articles, theses and critical essays on African and Nigerian poetry, literary theory and cultural studies, which provide theoretical grounding and contextual understanding to support the analysis of the primary texts. The study employs close textual analysis and thematic analysis to interpret the poems. Recurring motifs, symbols, imagery and stylistic devices related to peace and justice are identified, and thematic criticism is applied to organize and examine the central ideas. The frameworks of social realism and literature as social engagement are used to situate the poets' works within the broader socio-cultural and historical realities of Offa, highlighting how poetry functions as both reflection and critique of society.

To ensure validity, interpretations are supported by textual evidence and grounded in established literary and theoretical perspectives. Reliability is achieved through consistent application of analytical criteria across all selected poems and careful documentation of findings. This methodology provides a systematic and context-sensitive framework for analyzing how Abubakar Ahmad Agbaje and Abdullahi Wuraola articulate peace and justice in their poetry, demonstrating the significance of literary expression in shaping communal values and ethical consciousness in Offa, Nigeria.

Analysis and Discussion

Background of the Selected Poets

- **Brief biography of Abubakar Ahmad Agbaje**

Abubakar Agbaje is a contemporary Nigerian poet of Yoruba origin, born in 1998 in Offa, Kwara State, northern Nigeria. He comes from a family deeply rooted in Islamic scholarship and religious tradition. His grandfather, also named Abubakar Agbaje, was a religious man with a passion for knowledge and a generous supporter of Islamic education and pilgrimage. His father, Ahmad Abubakar Agbaje, is a well-known Islamic scholar, preacher, and poet in Offa, and currently works as a lecturer at Fountain University in Osogbo, Osun State.

Abubakar Agbaje grew up under his father's guidance and received his early education at Darussalam College for Arabic and Islamic Studies in Offa - a school founded by his grandfather. There, he studied classical Arabic texts, poetry and jurisprudence, which significantly shaped his literary style and linguistic richness.

He is classified among African Arabist poets who represent a modern Arabic-African poetic revival. Unlike earlier African poets who largely imitated classical Arabic poetry in form and content, Agbaje's work focuses on social, cultural and ethical themes, including love, praise, congratulation and lyrical expression, making his poetry distinctly contemporary within the Arabic literary scene in Africa.

After completing secondary education, he traveled to Niger Republic in 2016 and enrolled at the Islamic University of Niger, where he studied Arabic literature and further developed his poetic talent under prominent professors. He later returned to Nigeria for national service (NYSC) in Bauchi State and pursued postgraduate studies. In 2021, he moved to Qatar for academic opportunities, where he continued

to engage in literary activities, including participating in university poetry competitions. Abubakar Agbaje has published several poetry collections, the first of which is titled "كأنها حروف شريفة" (As If They Were Straying Letters), which is the subject of the research in the provided document.

- **Brief biography of Abdullahi Wuraola**

Abū Muḥammad Maysar ‘Abdullāh ibn Muḥammad Ma‘rūf Olatunji Wuraola is a native of Offa, Nigeria, a town widely recognized for its long-standing tradition of Islamic scholarship, spirituality and literary excellence. Offa has historically produced distinguished scholars, intellectuals, and writers, and the author stands firmly within this intellectual heritage. He was born on Thursday, 15 April 1983, in Gombe City, where his father was actively engaged in Islamic missionary work. His father, a committed preacher and educator, was among those scholars whose dedication to religious propagation extended across distant regions, spreading faith and learning beyond their immediate communities. As the author grew older, circumstances led him back to Offa, the ancestral home of his family, where his intellectual and moral foundations were further strengthened within a community known for diligence, resilience and scholarly integrity.

The poet was raised in a household deeply rooted in learning, ethical discipline, and religious commitment. From an early age, he demonstrated a strong inclination toward literature, particularly poetry and prose, alongside a keen appreciation for aesthetic expression. His intellectual upbringing was profoundly influenced by his father, who was not merely a teacher but a leading scholar of his generation. His father distinguished himself through literary discernment and scholarly excellence at a time when such distinction was rare, earning widespread respect within scholarly circles. His father served as his first teacher, introducing him to Qur’anic studies and foundational texts in Islamic jurisprudence and theology, including classical works in *fiqh* and *sharī‘ah*. He later pursued advanced studies under the guidance of the eminent scholar Shaykh Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Olose, with whom he studied for nine years, dedicating himself to learning with sincerity and devotion.

The poet continued his academic journey through several reputable institutions. He studied at Zakariyya Islamic College (2003–2006), followed by the College of Arabic and Islamic Legal Studies (2006–2008). He further refined his literary and intellectual skills at Shaykh ‘Abd al-Wāḥid ‘Alīy Adebisi School before enrolling at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (2009–2015), where he obtained a Bachelor’s

degree in Islamic Studies. He later earned a Master's degree from the University of Ilorin (2015–2017) and aspires to pursue doctoral studies in the near future.

Throughout his scholarly development, the poet was influenced by several distinguished scholars, notably his father Muḥammad Ma'rūf Olatunji; Shaykh Muṣṭafā Olose; Professor Dr 'Alīy 'Abd al-Wāḥid Adebisi; and Dr. Aḥmad Abubakar Agbaje, among others. He remains deeply grateful to these mentors and prays that their contributions be rewarded abundantly. The poet's academic vision is driven by purpose and commitment. He aspires to attain the rank of professor before the age of fifty, not in pursuit of personal acclaim, but to broaden the reach of his intellectual and religious service. He seeks to be recognized as a literary scholar of refined expression, a jurist of insight and wisdom, and a devoted preacher who communicates faith with clarity, compassion, and intellectual rigor. This biography represents the beginning of his scholarly journey, with its continuation entrusted to divine guidance and communal support.

Themes of Peace in the Selected Poems

- **Peace as communal harmony**

سلامة وطن أن يعيش أناسه # بلا خوف بطش أو دم يتقطع
إذا نام طفل أمنا في فراشه # فذاك دليل المجد من حيث يجمع
سلامة عدل حين يحكم بيننا # فلا يظلم الضعفاء بل كل يقنع
إذا ساد أمن الناس ساد ازدهارهم # وزان الحضارات وما كان أروغ
هي العهد بين الناس أن لا يخيفهم أخ أو يريق الدم من حيث يسمع

English Translation

The safety of a nation lies in its people living
Without fear of oppression or bloodshed.

When a child sleeps safely in his bed,
That is true evidence of collective glory.

Justice's safety appears when judgment prevails among us,
So the weak are not oppressed and all are contented.

When people's security reigns, their prosperity reigns,
And civilizations are adorned—how magnificent they become.

It is a covenant among people that none should frighten another,
Nor shed blood where cries are heard.

Discussion

The extracted verses present peace as a collective and communal condition, rather than a purely individual experience. Wuraola conceptualizes peace as *salāmat al-waṭan* (the safety of the nation), achieved when people live free from fear, violence and oppression. With foregrounding the image of a child sleeping safely, the poet employs a powerful symbol of innocence and vulnerability to emphasize that communal harmony is measured by how well society protects its weakest members. This aligns with peace studies scholarship, which identifies human security as a core indicator of sustainable peace (Galtung, 1969).

Furthermore, the poem closely links peace with justice, presenting justice as a stabilizing force that ensures communal satisfaction and prevents oppression. The line “so the weak are not oppressed and all are content” reinforces the idea that peace cannot exist in an environment of injustice or inequality. This perspective resonates with African communitarian ethics and Islamic moral philosophy, both of which stress equity, social balance and collective responsibility as foundations of peaceful coexistence (Ramose, 1999; Al-Ilori, 1982).

Wuraola frames peace as a social covenant, a shared moral agreement among community members to renounce fear, violence, and bloodshed. By doing so, the poet elevates peace from a political condition to an ethical obligation rooted in human relationships. The association of peace with prosperity and civilizational advancement further underscores poetry's role as social advocacy, echoing Osundare's (2002) view of poetry as a medium for moral enlightenment and communal transformation. Through this thematic construction, Wuraola presents peace as communal harmony sustained by justice, mutual trust, and collective moral commitment.

- **Peace as dialogue and reconciliation**

سلامة قول لا يُجرح سامعاً # ولا يُشعل البغضاء من حيث تُزرع

إذا الكلمة البيضاء جاءت سليمة # تلاشت ظلال الشر بل هي تُقنع

وراحةُ قلبٍ لا يحملُ الحقدَ سرمدًا # فكم أحرقتُ نارُ الضغينةِ أجمعُ
بها يتلاقى العقلُ والحلمُ توأماً # ويُغلقُ بابُ الشرِّ من حيثُ يُشرعُ
هي العهدُ بين الناسِ أن لا يُخيفَهم # أخُ أو يُريقَ الدمَ من حيثُ يُسمعُ

English Translation

The safety of speech is that it injures no listener
And does not ignite hatred where it is sown.

When pure words come forth untainted,
The shadows of evil fade, for such words persuade.

And the peace of a heart that carries no lasting hatred—
How often has the fire of rancor consumed all.

Through it, reason and forbearance meet as twins,
And the door of evil is closed at the very point it opens.

It is a covenant among people that none should frighten another,
Nor shed blood where cries are heard.

Discussion

In these verses, Abdulrahman Wuraola presents peace as a product of ethical dialogue and conscious communication. The poet emphasizes *salāmat al-qawl* (the safety of speech), suggesting that peaceful coexistence begins with language that avoids injury, provocation and hatred. Speech, in this context, functions as a primary tool either for social cohesion or social breakdown. By advocating “pure words” that persuade rather than inflame, the poet aligns peace with dialogue grounded in respect, persuasion and moral responsibility. This view echoes dialogic theories of peace, which recognize communication as a central mechanism for conflict prevention and resolution (Freire, 1970).

The poem further frames reconciliation as an inner moral process, rooted in the purification of the heart from enduring hatred. Wuraola’s imagery of hatred as a destructive fire highlights the corrosive effects of resentment on both individuals and communities. Peace, therefore, is not merely the absence of open conflict but the presence of emotional and moral reconciliation. This perspective resonates strongly

with Islamic ethical teachings, where forgiveness (*'afw*) and reconciliation (*ṣulḥ*) are regarded as essential virtues for sustaining social harmony (Al-Ilori, 1982; Qur'an 41:34).

Additionally, the poet conceptualizes peace as a social covenant maintained through reason (*'aql*) and forbearance (*ḥilm*). By portraying reason and patience as “twins,” Wuraola underscores the necessity of dialogue that balances intellect with emotional restraint. This synthesis closes “the door of evil” at its inception, suggesting that conflicts are best resolved through calm negotiation rather than violence. Such a portrayal aligns with African communitarian ethics, which prioritize dialogue, consensus, and reconciliation in resolving disputes (Ramose, 1999). Through these verses, Wuraola affirms poetry's role as a medium for promoting dialogue-driven peace and reconciliation within the community.

Themes of Justice in the Selected Poems

- Justice as fairness and equity

بها يستوي في الحق حرٌّ ومُعدَّم # ولا يُرفعُ الباغي ويفنى التنازع
عدالة قاضٍ لا يُمالئُ صاحبًا # ولا يُنقذُ الجاني إذا المأل دافع
بها يأمن الضعفاء من شكواهم # إلى سمع حق لا يضام يُسامع
أقيموا على القسطاس في كل موطن # فبالعدل تحيا الأرض وهي تُتابع
إذا استوت الأحكام زال تشاحن # وعاش الجميع آمنًا متواضع

English Translation

Through it, the free and the destitute stand equal in rights,
The transgressor is not elevated, and conflict fades away.

The justice of a judge who does not favor an ally,
Nor rescue a criminal when wealth offers defense.

Through it, the weak find safety in presenting their complaints
To an ear of truth that neither wrongs nor ignores them.

Uphold the balance in every place,
For through justice the earth lives on in continuity.

When judgments are equalized, discord disappears,
And all live securely, humbly together.

Discussion

In these verses, Abdulrahman Wuraola articulates justice as a principle of fairness and equity, emphasizing equality before the law regardless of social status. The line “the free and the destitute stand equal in rights” directly challenges social hierarchies that privilege wealth or power. Justice, as presented in the poem, is not symbolic but operational - manifested through impartial judgment and equal application of rules. This conception closely aligns with Rawls’ (1971) theory of justice as fairness, which emphasizes equal basic rights and impartiality in social institutions.

The poet further underscores institutional justice by focusing on the ethical responsibility of judges. The image of a judge who neither favors allies nor allows wealth to influence verdicts critiques corruption and moral compromise within legal systems. By foregrounding the protection of the weak, Wuraola situates justice as a mechanism for social balance and communal stability. This mirrors African and Islamic ethical traditions, where justice (‘*adl*’) is regarded as a moral obligation that safeguards social cohesion and restrains abuse of power (Al-Ilori, 1982; Ramose, 1999).

Wuraola links fairness in judgment to peace and societal continuity. The poet suggests that equal justice eliminates discord and enables people to live securely and humbly together. Justice thus becomes the foundation of collective harmony and sustainable coexistence rather than mere legal compliance. This perspective resonates with Galtung’s (1969) notion of positive peace, where justice and equity are essential for preventing structural violence. Through poetic clarity and moral conviction, Wuraola presents justice as an indispensable pillar of human dignity, communal trust, and enduring social order.

- **Moral responsibility and accountability**

أنشكرهم رغماً ونحسن شكرهم	# وقد وجدوا من ظلمنا دائماً جزفاً
ونسكتُ مقهورين في قعر غدرهم	# ونسقى احتسَاءً من مراراته ضعفاً
عزاءً لشعبٍ سادَهُ الصمتُ كلما	# أرادوا كلاماً قرَّبوا موتهم زُلفى

يعيش ليبقى ميتاً تحت صمته # وقد مات قبل الموت في صمته ألفا
ألم يأن أن تستيقظوا من رقودكم # وأن تشتروا من ورقكم حينه العُرفا
فإمّا سكوتٌ لا قيامة بعده # وإمّا كلامٌ ينزع الظلم والعنفا

English Translation

Do we thank them unwillingly and perfect our praise,
While they have always found in our weakness a path for oppression?

We remain silent, subdued in the depths of their betrayal,
Drinking bitterness in repeated sips of frailty.

Alas for a people ruled by silence whenever
They seek to speak, drawing death ever closer.

They live only to remain dead beneath their silence,
Having died a thousand times before death itself.

Is it not time to awaken from your slumber
And reclaim your rightful dignity from your own hands?

For either silence - with no resurrection thereafter -
Or speech that uproots injustice and violence.

Discussion

In these verses, Abubakri Agbaje frames silence in the face of oppression as a moral failure, emphasizing collective responsibility and accountability. The poet condemns passive gratitude toward oppressors, portraying it as a form of complicity that enables continued injustice. By questioning the act of thanking those who thrive on the people's weakness, Agbaje exposes how moral negligence sustains systems of exploitation. This aligns with ethical theories that identify silence and inaction as indirect forms of wrongdoing, particularly in contexts of social injustice (Arendt, 1963).

Agbaje further develops the theme by presenting silence as a form of social death. The repeated imagery of a people "dead beneath their silence" underscores the dehumanizing effect of moral disengagement. The poet suggests that the loss of

voice leads to the erosion of dignity, identity and agency. This notion resonates with African communitarian thought, where individual and collective existence is sustained through active participation and moral duty to the community (Ramose, 1999). Silence, therefore, is not neutral; it represents a betrayal of communal responsibility.

The poem culminates in a direct moral challenge, presenting a binary choice between destructive silence and transformative speech. Agbaje frames speech as an ethical act capable of dismantling injustice and violence, thereby restoring moral order. This position echoes Freire's (1970) argument that naming oppression through dialogue is a prerequisite for liberation. Through urgent rhetorical questioning and stark moral contrasts, Agbaje portrays accountability as an active duty that demands courage, voice, and sacrifice. His poem thus functions as a call to moral awakening, insisting that societal renewal depends on the willingness of individuals and communities to assume responsibility for justice and change.

Comparative Analysis of the Two Poets

Both Abubakri Agbaje and Abdulrahman Wuraola demonstrate strong thematic engagement with issues of peace, justice and moral responsibility, positioning poetry as a medium for social reflection and ethical advocacy. A major similarity in their works lies in their shared concern for societal well-being and communal harmony. Each poet views peace not merely as the absence of conflict but as a condition sustained by justice, moral consciousness and collective responsibility. Through their poems, both Agbaje and Wuraola critique social injustice, condemn oppression and call attention to the consequences of silence, inequality and moral failure within society. Their poetic visions align with African literary traditions that emphasize the writer's role as a social conscience and moral guide.

Another point of convergence between the two poets is their emphasis on accountability and ethical responsibility. Wuraola's poems frequently foreground justice as fairness, equity and institutional integrity, highlighting the importance of impartial judgment and moral leadership. Similarly, Agbaje focuses on the moral obligations of individuals and communities, particularly the responsibility to speak out against injustice and resist oppression. In both cases, silence is portrayed as destructive, while ethical action and moral courage are presented as necessary for social renewal. This shared thematic focus underscores the poets' commitment to peacebuilding and justice advocacy within their socio-cultural contexts.

Despite these thematic similarities, the two poets differ significantly in their stylistic approaches and modes of expression. Abdulrahman Wuraola's poetry is largely didactic and instructive, characterized by clarity of message, moral aphorisms and structured argumentation. His use of classical Arabic diction, balanced imagery and proverbial expressions lends his poetry a reflective and advisory tone. Wuraola often adopts a calm, reasoned voice that seeks to persuade the reader through ethical reasoning and moral appeal, presenting peace and justice as achievable ideals grounded in communal values and institutional reform.

In contrast, Abubakri Agbaje's poetic style is more emotive, confrontational and urgent. His poems are marked by intense imagery, rhetorical questioning and a tone of lamentation and protest. Agbaje employs emotional language to convey despair, frustration and moral outrage, particularly in response to oppression and societal silence. While Wuraola emphasizes moral order and balance, Agbaje foregrounds the psychological and emotional consequences of injustice, using poetry as a form of resistance and awakening. His approach compels readers to confront uncomfortable truths and assume moral responsibility.

Overall, the comparative analysis reveals that while Agbaje and Wuraola share common thematic concerns with peace, justice and moral accountability, they employ distinct stylistic strategies to achieve their aims. Wuraola's poetry leans toward moral instruction and reconciliation, whereas Agbaje's work adopts a protest-oriented and emotionally charged stance. Together, their poems offer complementary perspectives on peace and justice, enriching the literary discourse from Offa, Nigeria, and demonstrating the diverse ways poetry can engage with social realities and inspire ethical transformation.

Findings of the Study

The findings of this study reveal that peace and justice are central and interrelated themes in the selected poems of Abubakri Agbaje and Abdulrahman Wuraola. A key thematic insight is the poets' shared portrayal of peace as a holistic condition that encompasses communal harmony, justice, dialogue and moral responsibility. Peace is not presented merely as the absence of conflict but as a state sustained by fairness, ethical conduct and collective accountability. Justice emerges as a foundational element of peace, particularly through representations of fairness, equity and impartial judgment. The poems consistently emphasize that injustice, silence in the face of wrongdoing and moral indifference lead to social decay, instability and human suffering. Together, the poets articulate a vision of society in which peace

and justice are mutually reinforcing values essential for sustainable communal coexistence.

Another significant finding concerns the role of poetry as a tool for peace and justice advocacy. The study demonstrates that poetry functions as a powerful medium for social critique, moral instruction and consciousness-raising. Through evocative language, symbolism and rhetorical strategies, the poets challenge oppression, expose social inequalities and call for ethical awakening. Wuraola's poetry adopts a didactic and conciliatory approach, advocating dialogue, justice, and reconciliation as pathways to peace, while Agbaje's poems employ emotional intensity and protest to confront silence, complicity and moral failure. Despite their stylistic differences, both poets use poetry to influence public thought, inspire reflection and encourage active engagement with societal issues. This underscores the capacity of poetry to serve as a non-violent yet impactful means of addressing conflict and injustice.

The study also highlights the strong cultural relevance of the poems within the Offa socio-cultural context. The poets draw extensively on local experiences, communal values and moral philosophies rooted in African and Islamic traditions. Concepts such as communal responsibility, justice (*'adl*), peace (*salām*), patience, and moral accountability are embedded in the poems, reflecting the ethical frameworks that shape the community's worldview. By articulating these values in poetic form, the poets preserve cultural identity while simultaneously engaging contemporary social challenges. The findings thus affirm that indigenous poetry from Offa is not only culturally grounded but also socially responsive, functioning as a bridge between tradition and modern concerns. Overall, the study establishes that the selected poems play a significant role in promoting peace, justice and moral consciousness, reinforcing the importance of local literary voices in broader discourses of social development and ethical transformation.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine how peace and justice are reflected in selected poems from Offa, Nigeria, with particular focus on the works of Abubakri Agbaje and Abdullahi Wuraola. The primary objective was to analyze the poets' thematic engagement with peace, justice, moral responsibility and social accountability, as well as to assess the role of poetry as a medium for social critique and advocacy within a specific cultural context. By situating the poems within their socio-cultural and ethical environments, the study sought to demonstrate how local poetic expressions contribute meaningfully to broader discourses on peacebuilding and justice.

The analysis has shown that peace and justice are deeply interconnected in the selected poems and are presented as essential foundations for communal harmony and societal stability. The poets consistently argue that peace cannot exist in the absence of justice, fairness and moral integrity. Abdulrahman Wuraola's poetry emphasizes justice as equity, dialogue, reconciliation and institutional fairness, presenting peace as a product of ethical governance and mutual respect. In contrast, Abubakri Agbaje's poems foreground moral responsibility and accountability, highlighting the destructive consequences of silence, oppression and collective complacency. Despite differences in style and tone, both poets converge in their critique of injustice and their call for ethical awakening and social responsibility.

The implications of this study are significant for both literary scholarship and society. From a literary perspective, the study expands existing scholarship by foregrounding indigenous poetic voices from Offa, thereby challenging the dominance of canonical and urban-centered narratives in African literary criticism. It also demonstrates the relevance of Arabic and bilingual poetic traditions in Nigeria as vital platforms for social engagement. From a societal standpoint, the findings reaffirm the power of literature, particularly poetry, as a non-violent tool for peace advocacy, moral education, and social transformation. The poems underscore the importance of dialogue, justice and accountability in addressing contemporary social challenges. Ultimately, this study affirms that poetry remains a vital cultural resource for fostering ethical consciousness, strengthening communal values, and promoting sustainable peace and justice in society.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, there is a strong need to encourage the documentation, preservation and publication of indigenous poetry from local communities such as Offa. Many valuable poetic works remain undocumented or circulate only orally or in limited manuscripts, which puts them at risk of loss. Systematic efforts by scholars, cultural institutions and educational bodies to collect, archive, translate, and publish these poems will help preserve cultural heritage and ensure wider accessibility. Such documentation will also be instrumental in showcasing the intellectual and artistic contributions of local poets to national and global literary discourse.

The study further recommends increased scholarly attention to local Nigerian poets who operate outside the mainstream literary canon. Future research should explore poets from diverse regions, languages and traditions, including Arabic, Ajami, and indigenous-language poetry in Nigeria. Comparative studies across regions and

linguistic traditions would enrich understanding of how peace, justice and social responsibility are articulated in different cultural contexts. Additionally, interdisciplinary research combining literature with history, sociology and peace studies would provide deeper insights into the social impact of local poetry and its role in community development and conflict resolution.

Finally, this study recommends the integration of literary works, especially poetry that promotes peace and justice, into formal and informal peace education initiatives. Educational curricula at secondary and tertiary levels should incorporate indigenous literary texts as tools for teaching ethical values, dialogue, tolerance and civic responsibility. Poetry can serve as an effective pedagogical resource for engaging learners emotionally and intellectually with issues of justice, accountability and peaceful coexistence. Beyond the classroom, community-based programs, workshops and cultural forums can use poetry readings and discussions to foster dialogue and reconciliation. Integrating literature into peace education will not only enhance moral awareness but also strengthen the role of the arts in promoting sustainable social harmony.

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