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## **Social Criticism from Poets and its Educational Implications: Reflections From Selected Nigerian (Igbo) Poems**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The phenomenal increase in the rate of societal ills and degeneration in a flawed social structure and the shabby conditions of living has led to frustrations, predicaments and destabilization in the African society in Nigeria- Anambra State, Abia, Imo, Enugu, Ebonyi, Rivers and Delta. It is this phenomenon that has attracted the attention of this study. In Nigeria, Igbo Literary artists have continued to use poetry to throw light on the evil, negative issues and oppressive tendencies as a way of playing their roles in the re-education, re-orientation and re-direction of their societies. Poetry is a genre in literature but most often emphasis are focused more on drama and prose genres, neglecting the poetry genre which is full of wisdom and has always been the communicative means to express and unfold feeling towards any ugly dispositions in the society with the aim of changing the situation for progress and development. The objective of this study therefore is to critically highlight the societal vices and faults arising from a debased society as seen in the selected poems under review. To do a thorough work in this regard, the study adopted the Survey Research Method. The research is based on the sociological theory of Karl Marx. These selected Igbo poems were analyzed: - 'Ndu' (Life), 'E Nwela M n'Ozu' (Don't Own Me at Death). These were analyzed to find out where these societal vices were critically revealed by the literary Igbo poets. Also the educational implication were explored. Some of the findings of this research show that the society is plagued with such vices like unfair and uncaring treatments towards the suffering masses, the lack of concern for the aged and handicapped in our midst today. The study also identifies the language and figurative expressions in the poems. The study was concluded with some recommendations given. It is hoped that the measures offered can go a long way towards a reformation and transformation in the society.

**Keywords:** Social criticism, societal ills, Education, Poems and Nigeria.

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## INTRODUCTION

A writer has not yet started to write when he does not believe he has a socially realistic and relevant message to give to the society. The utter most concern of the poet is to carry alongside his voice and the voice of society, to help address the societal ills. Many literary works especially through poetry, criticize, lament and satirize the flawed social structure of society in order to awaken the consciousness of the masses against any dehumanizing tendencies. Their writings are charged with indignation at the deplorable social conditions surrounding us, as they write to create awareness in consideration of the plight of the abandoned or neglected issues in the society [1, 2]. We live in a society and must treat one another accordingly. This is the mission of the poet as a social critic, and to make careful judgment about how we might act with greater decency, generosity and fairness to one another; they write for a primary reason - for the emancipation of the common man. Poetry as a genre in literature has always been the communicative means to express and unfold their feelings toward any ugly dispositions or startling discovery in society [3, 4].

Poets depend on the social settings for their visions in democratizing literature. These perceived social realities are made available in works of art in order to help promote positive changes in the society's norms and values. The beneficiaries of any development and social progress in society are the humans of a given society. If a nation attains growth and progressive successes members of the society are raised to greater heights but when the needs of the people are not fulfilled, they suffer [5].

## Poetry

[6] points that poetry as an aspect or branch of literature has a functional role of complimenting the literary and artistic expressions of the African beauty of native, social reality and philosophy of life. A poet remains one of the sharpers of the whole intellectual tradition of civilization.

Poetry has existed from the beginning of man and it keeps living with time. It has been said that the words of poetry are full of suggestions, of unrevealed meaning, a meaning which will grow out of them under the influence of thought and imaginations. The poet dissects the many complex issues that are predicament to the society, the many perspectives and rot around him that have triggered off his imagination with the crucial role of changing the situation for good. The duty of the poet is first to highlight and bring to the fore the problem confronting individuals as it affect the generality of the society [7].

### Social Critics

Social critics focus on the 'ugly realities of contemporary life and sympathize with particularly the poor. It refers to work of creative arts that draws attention to the everyday conditions of the working classes and the poor who are critical of the social structures that maintain these conditions; it arouses concern for the urban poor, keeping a keen eye on current events and era's social and political rhetoric. Literary works should therefore be created to inspire readers to stand up for revolution with a burning righteous mind. Social critics criticize situations where people are routinely discriminated against and in some cases, out rightly abused neglected & despised because they cannot stand up or speak up for themselves. These ills can be seen in the unfair and uncaring treatments towards the less privileged, child abuse, violations on women rights, failure of governance and good leadership, ethnic, religious & economic discriminations, molestations, victimization, degenerations, traumatic conditions of workers etc.

These vices dominate almost every spheres of the society. The poets, through their works show concern and discourage possible deviants from such unaccepted behaviors in a bid to positively reshape the society. The contemporary society has a lot of challenges that are socially relevant, these provide materials for the literary works because functional literature stresses on and reflects on what is prevalent in the society. Social criticism locates the reasons for malicious conditions in a society considered to be in a flawed social structure. It may also refer to people adhering to a social critic's aim at practical solution by way of specific measures, either for consensual reform or powerful revolution [8, 9, 10]. It is a term used to refer to the area that deals with the exposure of faults in various aspects of the society and analyses social structure which are seen as flaws and aims at practical solutions to help make the world a better place.

#### NDỤ

Ndụ abụghị oriri na ọnụnụ  
Ndụ abụghị ole akụ na ụba i nwere  
Ndụ abụghị onye afọ ukwu  
Ndụ abụghị onye ihe na-agara nke ọma

#### LIFE

Ndụ dị ụzọ abụọ  
Ndụ ụwa na ndụ eluigwe  
Aja a chụrụ maka ndụ eluụwa a  
Bụ ya na-eduba na ndụ eluigwe  
Gịnị ka ndụ bụ?

Nọrọ dozie ụzọ.

N'ichọ ụzọ i nyere mmadụ aka ka ndụ dị  
Ihụnanya na eziumume na-enye ndụ  
Nsọpụrụ na ime ihe dị mma  
N'ihu Chineke na mmadụ na-enye ndụ  
Ọ bụ ihe ndị a na-eme ka ndụ too ogologo  
Ma dịkwa uto

N'ogige ahịhia ndụ ka ndụ dị  
Ebe ekworo na anya ụfụ  
Gara njem alọta alọta  
Ebe udo na ihụnanya na-asọ isi  
Ebe ahụ ka ndụ nke mmụọ malitere.

Life is not about eating and drinking  
Life is not about how wealthy you are  
Life is not one with a big belly  
Life is not about one who is successful.

There are types of life  
Life on earth and life in the kingdom  
Sacrifice offered for life on earth  
Is what takes one to life eternity  
What then is life?  
Stay and amend ways.

There is life in seeking for ways to help others.  
Love and Goodness gives life  
Respect and good works  
Before God and man gives life  
These are what prolong life  
Meaningful and happy

In the place of foliage, there is life  
Where strife and Jealousy

Journeyed never to come back  
Where peace and love are blindfolded  
That is where life in the spirit starts.  
[7].

This poem of four stanzas written by Ezeuko & Anowai is a didactic poem that instructs and reveals the true meaning of life. Life is not all about food and wealth. The essence of living is in making life better for others, improving the quality of life by helping other people and providing laws for the pursuit of well being of others. Love, goodness, kindness, all these virtues prolong life, make life meaningful for human existence on earth till eternity.

Some of the themes in the poem point to these:

- a. Neglect in the welfare of the masses
- b. Giving help to the needy
- c. Elimination, selfishness, strife and Jealousy
- d. The meaning of the true living.

The mission of the poet as a critic in the poem '**Ndu**' directs our attention to the neglected social welfare of the helpless masses. In society today, so many important issues and amendments are neglected and abandoned, especially as it concerns the poor masses, the down trodden, the aged and the less-privileged. We live in a society where leaders do not care or show concern to the basic needs of the people. They are self-centred and selfish, amassing wealth without any interest of the populace in mind, as [1] observes.

Our collective predicament is both caused and compounded by our societal ills as many Nigerian leaders seem to care less about the welfare of the ruled majority. Many developmental problems facing Nigeria today include the fact of a disintegrated bourgeoisie or middle-class, the near collapse of our socio-cultural and political system and structures, seriously weakened, by the role of many of our incompetent, dishonest, corrupt, selfish and unpatriotic leaders.

Almost all the systems or structures in the society are about to collapse; poor water supply, lack of control on fake or adulterated drugs, lack of control in bribery and corruption, constant killings of innocent citizens due to lack of adequate security, lack of quality food and starvation, political or religious rivalry, neglecting to keep the surroundings clean and tidy, the way we treat life- not caring for man and having no value for life and for the good of all, neglect to taking vaccines, cigarettes and consuming hard drugs, diseases like HIV, Ebola, not accepting one another for what we are, intimidating and dominating people by kidnapping, witchcraft, Boko Haram, lack of prison reforms and tribal or ethnic disintegration, increase in poverty and diseases, neglect in our environment

by allowing pollutions. The depressing and pathetic thing is that those in authority have no vision or wisdom on how best to tackle these turbulent issues. Their primary target is on eating, drinking, lavish spending and amassing in looted wealth, which should not be, as the poet points out:

Ndu abughị oriri na oñuñu  
Ndu abughị ole akụ na ụba i nwere  
Ndu abughị onye afọ ukwu  
Ndu abughị onye ihe na-agara nke oma.

Life is not about eating and drinking  
Life is not about how wealthy you are  
Life is not a pot-bellied one  
Life is not who is successful. (Stanza 1, 1- 4)

The message of the poet, to the visionless leaders, to the affluent, to the people, living in a society with traumatic and paralyzing social dislocations and a deep state of despair, is not to sit aimlessly in the mundane pursuit of eating and drinking but to “amend ways” for that is the meaningful purpose of living. Hence:-

Gịjị ka ndụ bụ?           What is life?  
Nọrọ dozie ụzọ           Stay and amend the ways.

The ignored and neglected societal structure seen in almost all sectors in the country need reorientation and reorganizing in order to update and improve the quality and standard of the living condition of the people. The new direction in vision and thought will stress the importance of people merging their collective efforts in what should be beneficial to the general society. For example amending and improving on the welfare of the masses, revisiting the educational, socio-political, economic, health agricultural and environmental sectors, researching, improving and developing all sectors of life. imbibing the spirit of patriotism, working hard as against being lazy, acts of kindness and charity, shunning evil and doing right, helping the youths to fulfil their dreams for a brighter future. ‘Anything goes’ way of life should be discouraged. Youths and all should not behave anyhow [11, 12, 13].

The future must not be underrated but must be properly protected; therefore there should be a change for the better. In the moral aspect, people go to church in great numbers, in millions but their actions are never that of Christians. Today, even in the

church, what is happening? - atrocities, there are criminals, witches, ritual murderers, wicked people, looters, all going to church. The only way out is change, amend ways and accept the word of God and never harden the heart to the word of God. The poets also reveal other answers to the meaning of 'life'. Hence:

N'ichọ ụzọ inyere mmadụ aka ka ndụ di  
Ihụnanya na eziumume na-enye ndụ (*Stanza 3, line 1-2*)

There is life in seeking for ways to help others  
Love and goodness gives life.

The society is filled with greedy, covetous, selfish and self-centred people who do not help the poor and less -privileged but amass in their personal wealth through embezzling the public fund. Giving is living. Givers never lack, only those who share are truly free. The poets extol the act of reaching out to help and give out to those in need for that is the true essence of living. For instance, employers should always pay their employees and not wait for them to go on strikes before they are paid, people should pay whatever they owe, work for their pay and never waste their official hours, fight to retain a good name, strive for a good character [14].

[15] says that giving and sharing what we have with the less-privileged can certainly change the face of poverty and [16] points that if we share what we have with others, the country and the world at large will not be as they are today. Some people have more than enough to eat, even as others eat from dustbins. One of the major destroyers of human destinies is the spirit of greed and covetousness. People increase and flourish when they share and not when money is hoarded. Money is not meant to be hoarded, it is life's manure; if it is hoarded it smells but when it is spread it makes everything around it to grow and blossom. Nothing comes into a clenched fist only an open palm can receive [17]. What is life if not to do well and contribute to the welfare of others? The greatest joy of life is not amassing wealth or materials but in transforming and enriching the lives of people through helping and giving, investing in the lives of the poor, the less-privileged through scholarships, sponsorship, donations, grants etc. One becomes great when the welfare and well being of others matter to one and the willingness to help is expressed. Greatness cannot be measured by how much a person has but in the measure of his or her influence and impact on the lives of other people. Living for others is the true definition of greatness. The memories of those who live for themselves die with them but the memories of those who live for others continue to live long after death. Winston Churchill says, "*you make a living*

*by what you get, you make a life by what you give (online)*" The biggest and best investment one can ever make therefore, is in other human beings.

Those who want to live meaningfully and well must help enrich the lives of others. Those who choose to be happy must help others find happiness for the welfare of each is bound up with the welfare of all. In life, when you help the people around you to be good, you surely become the best.

The society is plagued with so many people who cannot afford the basic necessities of life such as food, shelter, water, clothes. There are lunatics and street beggars, prisoners who dejectedly sit, wailing anxiously for alms that were not forthcoming, destitute, the orphanage homes, disabled people, people begging for aid to do a heart or kidney transplant, displaced people from homes due to flood disaster, insurgency from Boko Haram attacks, lepers, widows, the deaf and dumb, refugees, the blind and partially sighted, the aged, people living with cancer and HIV.

In the anguish of the suffering mankind, the primary concern should be how to put smiles on the faces of those less-privileged, how to show kindness in order to remove hunger, thirst, poverty, homelessness, disease and starvation and help make the world a better place for them to live in.

In a land full of corruption, itching palms and selfish heart, it seems like not many people care. There is no much concern for human lives as we see these less-privileged roaming the streets day by day, begging for alms for survival. The need to plant love and goodness by giving financial help to the less-privileged in society makes life meaningful, promoting peace, concord and selfless service to humanity makes life worth living.

However, the poet's intention in the poem 'Ndụ' as critics is to draw attention to the various social-political and economic issues that need amendments and improvements. These challenges if not checked and corrected, breed stagnation and retard progress in any developing society. For instance, Nigeria produced and planted rice before but today rice is imported in large quantities. Nigeria used to have good medicines but today most tablets are nothing but chalk and powder. We used to enjoy peace but today, kidnappings, terrorism, especially Boko Haram has set in. Ghanaians used to troop to Nigeria in search of means of livelihood, today, Nigerians are trooping into Ghana for quality education and standard living. Roads are built today, next month they develop potholes. These are problems in society, if they are not checked and corrected; society will keep dwindling and falling backwards.

In today's economic and competitive environment, in our everyday living, the poets' vision is for all to make life a better place to live in by improving on the standards, day by day and not allow it to retard. More so, one must not forget to help the less-privileged in



society. All these make life meaningful, prolonging lives and matching towards a more dynamic and progressive society.

### ENWELA M N'OZU

### DO NOT OWN ME AT DEATH

Ugbu a, a kụchidere m igbe ozu  
Ka unu chetara na m bụ mmadụ  
Ugbu a, ka unu cherara na m bụ onye nke unu  
Ugbu a, ka ọ sọrọ unu ikwu okwu ọma banyere m

Mgbe m dị ndụ n'ụwa  
Adị m ka nwa ọkụkọ nne hapuru n'ike  
Adị m ka nwa nkita na-asaghi anya  
Nne ya anwuo.  
Abụ m onye dị na nsogbu, mkpa n'ahụhụ  
Onye chi ya were ehie jie  
Onye mutara ọkụ n'ala ndị mmuo

Puta n'ala ndị mmadụ ya anyuo  
Oge niile m na-akwa akwa  
O nweghi onye siri m ndo  
Ka ọ na-enwe onye juru ihe na-esogbu m  
Oge niile aguu na-agu m,  
Naani echiche ka m jiri mee nri  
Ebe na-enweghi onye nyere m rie

Oge niile na ndu m ka ụwa juru m  
Uwa nke m edeputa m n'uzo sonyuo oku  
M buru onye a juru aju  
Onye na-enweghi ihe ọma a ga-ekwu maka ya

Now that I have been sealed in a coffin  
That you remember that I am a human being  
Now you know I relate to you  
Now, you like to will talk good about me.

When I was living on earth  
I was like a hen abandoned by the mother  
I'm like a puppy that has not yet its eyes  
When the mothers die  
I am one troubled with wants and sufferings.  
One whose night fell in the day  
One that got fire from the spirit world

On entering into the world, the light extinguishing  
All the time I have been crying.  
Nobody pitied me  
Or asked what was wrong with me.  
All the time I have hungry.  
Only thinking became my food  
Since no one gave me to eat

Throughout my life, the world abandoned me.  
Life led me to where light went off.  
I become abandoned  
He who knows nothing will talk about him

Ugbu a anwuola m  
Taa ka m matara ihe ndi uwa a bu  
Unu ndi na-achọ ezumike ọrụ  
Ọnwụ m ebuterela unu ya taa.  
Taa ka ndi okwu na-adị mma n'ọnwụ  
Ga-ekwu ihe di ha n'ọnwụ banyere m  
Taa ka unu ga-akpọ m ome mma  
Taa ka unu ga-akpọ m nkịta nwaanyi zụrụ  
Ma ọ bụ onye ezi omume

Ugbu a, a na-achọ ikpochide m aja,  
Ka ụmụ nne m na ndi enyi m ga-apụta  
Kee ihu di ka ọnwụ gburu m  
Ugbu a, ka onye ọ bụla ga-achọ

Ikwu ihe di ya n'onu  
Ugbua a, ka ndi mmadu ga-asị  
Ewoo! Chineke nara mkpuru obi ya  
Maka na o tara ahuhu n'owa a.

Now, I am dead  
Today I know what the people are  
You that desire rest from work  
My death has brought it for you  
Today, those who like to talk  
Will say what are on their list  
Today you will call me a good one.  
Whether he has good behaviour  
Or one possessing in a good behavior

Now that I am about to be buried  
My brothers and friends will come  
Looking sad as the death that killed me  
Now everybody will want  
To talk whatever is on his lips  
Now, that the people can say  
Alias! May God receive his soul  
Because he suffered on earth

Mgbe ahụ ka ha ga-ebido  
Wukwasikwa ego n'elu igbe ozu m.  
Uru ginị ka ego a baara m?  
Ugbu a ejeruola m ebe m na-eje  
Ihe o soro unu werenu ozu m mee  
Ndi onwe mmadu n'ozu  
Otu aka unu si enwe mmadu

That is when they will start  
Pouring money on my casket  
Of what gain is that money to me?  
Now I have reached my destination  
Whatever you like, do with my corpse  
Those who own people at death  
That is how you own people

Ugbu a, a donyela m n'ili,  
Ugbu a, unu na-asị m gaa n'udo,  
Ebe m na-enweghi udo n'owa.  
Geenu nti ihe aja na-ada n'elu m

Now, that I am lowered in the grave  
Now, you are telling me to go in peace  
When I had no peace on earth  
Listen to the sound of sand poured on me

Aja ka ha na-ekpochide m  
Ugbu a, ha na-azọ ụkwụ n'elu ili m.

They are pouring sand on me  
Now, they are trampling my grave.

Ugbu a, elisiala m, mmadụ niile laa,  
gone

Now I have been have buried and all has

Laa n'ụlọ ha, na-eri, na-anụ

Gone to their houses eating and drinking

Chefuo na echi di ime

Forgetting that no one knows tomorrow

Ugbu a, o nweghị onye na-echeta m

Now, no one remembers me

Obi dī m mma na nkīta erighī ozu  
corpse

I am happy that dogs did not eat my

Ogbenye dī ka m

A poor person like me

Ma unu ndī dī ndū amaghī ebe unu  
where you are

But you who are living, do not know

Ga-anọ anwū, ma a ga-elikwa unu?  
buri

Where you will die or whether you will be

Unu amaghī ma enyi m udele ga-eri eriri afọ unu? You do not know whether my friend the  
vulture will eat your intestine?

Otu a ka amamiihie unu dī

This is how your wisdom looks like

Ndī onwe ozu!

Owners of corps [18].

This is a lamentation poem with nine stanzas, written by Nnamdi Olebara. The poet condemns the attitude of people who neglect their aged relative when they are living but when they die; they spend lavishly on the burial ceremony. Some of the themes in the poem are:

- A. Abandonment of the aged ones
- B. Selfishness
- C. Reckless spending

The poet as a social critic criticizes the attitude of people who heartlessly abandon their relatives, friends, aged ones without taking care of them. They are left all alone deserted and not catered for. No house helps to cook the meals, keep their clothes and environment clean or even take care of their health by taking them to the hospitals or giving them medications when sick. They are recklessly forsaken and utterly left to their fate. They are abandoned to go without food, weeping in solitary anguish with none to show concern or sympathy.

Usually these agonizing maltreatments send the elderly to regrets and depression, more especially when they are sick or disabled. Most times, they wish and long to end it all and

be free from the pains of neglect and abandonment. When they die, thousands of money is spent on the burial ceremony. The food and drinks flow. People seem to care more for the dead. We spend more to bury a person than we do to save their lives. People who never cared for them when they were living come and speak good concerning them. These concern and care should have been showered on them when they were alive not when they are gone.

It is sad to note that this generation does not care for the aged. Life is too busy nowadays and today, society is busier than ever before. There is no compassion and love shown on these vulnerable old ones who have contributed their quota to the development of society. As the poet laments that,

Abu m onye di na nsogbu, mkpa na ahuhu

I am one troubled with wants and sufferings [stanza 2]

oge niile aguu na-agu m

All the time I was hungry[stanza 3]

Oge niile na ndu m ka uwa juru m

Throughout my life the world abandoned me [stanza 4]

As the aged depressingly laments of their sufferings, troubles, wants, hunger and abandonment, we take a look at the spectre of the country's ill-treatment on the pensioners which continues to expose the lack of conscience on the leaders of the country. The delay in payment of pension arrears has put pensioners across the country in very precarious situations where they wallow in penury, sickness and regret after serving their fatherland diligently. Retirees who devoted their lives working and serving the country must not be scornfully discarded.

If the younger ones cater for them they would age with dignity. Most times when aging comes, the aged people are bed-ridden and suffer from diseases or debility. Some suffer mental illness, amnesia or terminal illness; whatever the challenge, they should be supported and not abandoned to suffer in anguished loneliness for no one knows tomorrow. As the poet points out:-

Oge niile m na-akwa akwa

O nweghi onye sirị m ndo

Ka o na-enwe onye juru ihe na-esogbu m

All the time I have been crying.  
Nobody pitied me  
Or asked what was wrong with me. (Stanza 9, Line 1-3)

This generation has become too self involved. We live in a society where nobody cares, everybody solving his or her problems, forgetting to take care of the old ones. One should be touched by the sufferings of the old. It is everybody's prayer to live long to old age. Even the government subjects the aged pensioners to pains before they pay pension to retired workers. There are also no standard old peoples homes well equipped to take care of the elderly. However, in most cultures throughout the world, elder care is a responsibility that falls on the shoulders of the family. Even in the family everybody is busy with his/her own care, anxiously trying best to meet up and make it in life, such that there is no or little time to show care and love as mother Theresa sums it, *"I think today, the world is upside down and is suffering so much because there is so very little love in the home and in the family life. We have no time for our children, we have no time for each other, there is no time to enjoy each other"*.

*"Love begins at home, love lives in homes and that is why there is so much suffering and so much unhappiness in the world today. Everybody today seems to be in such a terrible rush, anxious for greater development and greater riches so children have vary little time for their parents. Parents have very little time for each other and in the home begins the disruption of the world"* [online quote]. As people age, they need care-giving, lack of caretaker is a serious problem for the older people who have chronic conditions or limitations in their ability to care for themselves and their homes. [15] sums that people find it easy to love those who are good looking or fun to have around but do not like people who inconvenience us or make us feel uncomfortable.

In summary, the poet's vision is for all and sundry to take proper care of the aged so that they will not feel forgotten. A person may never receive roses in their entire life and they will get lots dumped on their grave yard. As Mother Theresa said,

*"The most terrible poverty is loneliness and the feeling of being unloved. The biggest disease today is not leprosy or tuberculosis, but rather the feeling of being unwanted. There is more hunger in the world for love and appreciation than for bread. We think that sometimes that poverty is only being hungry, naked and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for is the greatest poverty. We must start in our homes to remedy this kind of poverty."* (online quote).

The research is in line with the sociological theory of Karl Marx that advocates and demands above all, fairness to all, equality, calling on the poor masses to stand in the face of the exploiters and demand for what is rightfully theirs. Marxists studies generally aim at not only clarifying ideological issues but also correcting social injustice [9].

It is pertinent to note here that literature is a social reality and represents life. This approach regards literature as playing a vital role in the understanding of the society and knows that the writer is a member of the society. The analysis of these societal vices in the poetry works under review are social phenomenon hence the adoption of the sociological theory.

### **The poet's style of writing 'Ndu'**

In this poem, the poet adopted different poetic devices to criticize the lack of concern for the welfare of the masses in the society. Examples of such styles are:-

**Persuasive style:** This style of writing tries to give reasons, to make the reader believe his point of view. It aims to persuade or convince the readers. In the poem 'Ndu', the poet tries to convince what life (Ndu) is and what it should be. The real essence of life should be a life lived to help others and to keep improving, re-organizing and restructuring our standard of life to a better form.

**Diction:** The language of the poem is very simple and easy to understand. It flows as the reader goes through the lines. The choice of words depicts concern, care and eagerness for the reader to understand and be convinced in the message of the poem.

**Tone:** The tone of the poem is convincing and appealing. With humility the poet teaches what life (Ndu) truly means;

Figurative language:

#### **Personification**

- i. Ebe ekworo na anyaufu gara njem alota alota - Where strife and jealousy are on a journey of never to return
  - ii. Ebe udo na ihunanya na-aso isi (Stanza 4) - Where peace and love are blindfolded
- This means that there is peace and love. The personification twists the meaning but makes the reader to ponder and ponder in order to make out the meaning.

#### **Metaphor**

- i. O bu ihe ndi a na-eme ka ndu too ogologo (Stanza 3, line 4) - All these prolong life
- ii. N'ogige ahija ka ndu di (Stanza 4, line 1)

#### **Repetition**

- i. Ndu abughi oriri na onunu  
Ndu abughi ole aku...

Ndu abughi onye afo ukwu

Ndu abughi onye ihe na-agara... (Stanza 1, line 1-4)

The continual repetition of 'Ndu abughi' makes it musical.

ii. Ebe ekworo na anyaufu

Ebe udo na ihunanya...

Ebe ahụ ka ndu...

The continual repetition of 'Ebe' also creates a musical effect.

#### Assonance

i. Ebe ekworo na anya ufu gara njem alota alota

Continual repetitions of vowel sounds 'a, e', makes it sound musical.

#### The poet's style of writing 'E nwela M N'ozu'

**Narrative style:** This type of writing tells or narrates a story in the poem. He uses dialogues, actions and events in a sequence. The poet extends and fits himself into the poem to enable the reader feel with him on what he writes, we get to hear and see what is going on with the poet. The point of view is based on his personal experiences and values as he convinces the reader on how cruel and callous people can be over the neglect on the old, aged forgotten, sick and abandoned relatives. The poet incorporates himself into the poem to make the reader reason with him, in persuasion, to enable us see through his point of view and get the reader totally convinced in what he is saying. This is referred to as the first person's point of view.

**Diction:** The poet carefully selected the words to express how hurtful and sad he is over the neglect of the aged while living and spending lavishly during burial. The choice of the topic - 'E nwela m n'ozu - Do not own me at death and some of the sad expressions in the poem show that the poet is resentful and lamentation. For example:

'Geenu nti ihe aja na-ada n'elu m

Aja ka ha na-ekpochiche m (Stanza 3, line 4 - 5)

Listen to the sand poured on me

They are pouring sand on me

**Tone:** The tone of the poet indicates sadness, regret and lament.

Figurative language: Some of the figures of speech formed in the poem are:

#### Simile

i. Adi m ka nwa okuko nne hapuru n'ike

I am like a hen separated early from its mother

ii. Ogbenye di ka m

A poverty stricken like me (Stanza 9, line 6)



### Metaphor

- i. Chefue na echi di ime (Stanza 9, line 3)  
Forgetting that tomorrow is unpredictable
- ii. Unu chetara ma m bu onye nke unu (Stanza 1, line 3)  
You remember that I am your relation

The poet uses the simile and metaphor to convey ideas, and create vivid sight.

### Idiom

- i. Onye chi ya were ehie jie (Stanza 2, line 6)  
One whom doom has befallen
- ii. Onye mutara oku n'ala ndi mmuo (Stanza 2, line 7)  
One that got fire from the spirit world
- iii. Echiche ka m jiri mere nri (Stanza 3, line 7)  
I soaked myself in deep thoughts, lost in thoughts
- iv. Taa ka unu ga-akpo m nkita nwaanyi zuru (Stanza 5, line 8)  
Today you will refer to me as a spoilt child

The poet uses this device to make the reader think more carefully, in order to decipher the meaning.

### Rhetorical question

- i. Uru ginị ka ego a baara m? (Stanza 7, line 3)
- ii. Unu amaghị ma enyi m udele ga-eri eriri afo anu? (Stanza 9, line 10)

### Alliteration

- i. Oge niile m na-akwa akwa (Stanza 3, line 2) 'kw' sounds
- ii. ...e lisaia m, mmadu niile laa,  
Laa n'ulo ha... (stanza 9, line 1- 2) 'L' sounds
- iii. Ma unu ndi di ndu... (stanza 9, line 7) 'd' sounds

The poet uses alliteration for a visual and aural function. That is to say that the repeated sounds allow the syllable to amplify as each word is pronounced. This is used to emphasize the beauty of the language being used.

### Assonance

- i. Ma o bu nwa nkita na-asaghi anya (Stanza 2, line 3) 'a' sounds repeated
- ii. Ebe na-enweghi onu e nyere m rie (Stanza 3, line 7) 'e' sounds repeated
- iii. E jeruola m ebe m na-eje (stanza 7, line 4) 'e' sounds repeated

### Repetition

- i. Ugbu a, a kuchidere m... (stanza 1, line 1)  
Ugbu a ka unu chetara na... (stanza 1, line 3)

Ugbu a ka o soro unu ikwu... (stanza 1, line 4)

Ugbu a, anwụọla m (stanza 5, line 1)

Ugbu a, a na-achọ ikpochide... (stanza 6, line 1)

Ugbu a, ka ndị mmadụ... (stanza 6, line 6)

Ugbu a ejeruola m ebe... (Stanza 7, line 3)

Ugbu a, a donyela m n'ili (Stanza 8, line 1)

Ugbu a, e lisịala m ... (stanza 6, line 1)

Ugbu a ka ndị mmadụ ga-asị (stanza 6, line 6)

The poet continually repeats 'Ugbu a' on almost the beginning of all the stanzas. This makes the poem sound musical.

ii. Taa ka ndị okwu na-adị'... (Stanza 5, line 2)

Taa ka unu ga-akpọ m... (Stanza 5, line 7)

Taa ka unu ga-akpọ m nkịta nwaanyị zụrụ (Stanza 5, line 8)

Taa ka m matara ihe ndị ụwa bụ (Stanza 5, line 1)

The repetition of 'Taa' makes it musical, pleasurable and more persuasive.

### **Educational Implications/Recommendations**

Education strictly speaking is not mere acquisition of information and knowledge from books. Education is the path for understanding the meaning of life, humanity, creation and truth. Education is concerned with moulding people and their character. That means it plays the role of building values which will affect society positively. Simply, education is not only for job and attaining certificate rather education is for life. [7], stresses that an education that does not ensure that values and morals are imparted in the students, cannot be of service and benefit to humanity. Education leads to development by re-designing and re-fashioning our values. Literature especially poetry, just like education, has the fundamental role of imparting and teaching the values that shape man's behaviours. They are concerned with the universal truth. This is to say that the two branches of study are connected. For this, Igbo vernacular literature and other native languages, mostly poetry should be highlighted in school curriculum. This implies that every tribe of the world preserves their languages by teaching their offspring their language to allow the growth amid improvement of the language from generation to generation. Vernacular languages does not signify inferiority but power, boldness and honour to God who made it so.

To direct more attention to the study of Igbo poetry, students should be asked to read original contemporary poems. The exercise would help to stimulate their interest in poems and gain belief in themselves as creators as they put their mind in action . They would realize that creativity is a potential ability of everybody. As they practice this, teachers

should have them to write their own short poems by their own style and originality. Have them capture the picture in words because the language of poetry is witty, boned with ideas, loaded with deep meanings though short, knitted with emotions. As they feel poetry, they learn and feel the power of words. In awakening the interest of reading and writing poetry, the creativity is transferred and expressed in other related studies in their educational pursuits.

[11], posits that a language could face endangerment when it is not effectively patronized or passed on to subsequent generations. Therefore both Igbo language and other native African speakers both at home and abroad should not deprive the subsequent generations the opportunity to acquire their language. In this remarkable era of 'Subakwa Igbo', a time of Igbo renaissance, curriculum planners not only should they make Igbo language studies compulsory in the secondary and tertiary institutions of learning in the Igbo speaking states of Nigeria in Africa-Anambra, Imo, Ebonyi, Enugu, Abia, Rivers and some Delta states areas but should also stress more on the literature, highlighting more on the study of its poetry.

Also from the poem Ndu [life] which stresses among other things that the essence of life is helping others and making life better for them. This then implies reaching out to help students whose parents are poor and cannot pay the school fees of their children. Most students come from very wealthy, affluent and rich homes and the parents extravagantly dole out huge sums of money to their children. These rich students who drive flamboyant cars, throw parties, live in rented apartment, travel overseas during summers, can help some of their classmates who drop out of school due to the inability of the parents to pay school fees instead of wasting money on the frivolities of life.

The lecturers in most Nigerian tertiary institution who force the students to pay for hand-outs and make buying of text books compulsory or extort money from students in order to pass them, should know that most students struggle and engage in petty trading to make ends meet. These students, need help and support even from the teachers that demand money from them. The school authorities need to note the poor but hard working and brilliant students and encourage them to pay school fees in installmental means. This would enable them graduate from school without dropping out and ending up as social deviants or delinquent children. Government should give scholarships to the poor but intelligent students to help them finance their education. In addition, schools and centers for the blind, disabled, deaf and dumb should not be neglected but should constantly be upgraded and updated to meet up with the current educational standards in the society. Government should take care and cater for the needs of the teachers by making sure that

the wages / salaries are regularly upgraded. Their knowledge and skills should be improved and upgraded through in-service trainings workshops and conferences.

From the poem-*E Nwela m n 'ozu [Do Not Own Me At Death]* which condemns the attitude of children who abandon their parents when they are old. In life, wise parents sacrifice their comfort and starve to see that they train their children in professions like medicine, law, engineering, pharmacy in order to gain a high status in life, hoping that in future, their children will be responsible and successful and take proper care of them during old age. The sufferings and sleepless nights of our parents should not be overlooked or taken for granted. We are responsible for each other, so too children are responsible for their children. Children should pay back by nurturing, catering, showing love and taking proper care of their parents when they eventually grow old and not abandon them to wallow in loneliness, regret, despair, hunger and starvation.

On the side of the government, they should help matters by regularly paying the pensions and gratuities of the aged whenever they are due.

- From the poem '**Ndu**', one observes that the lack of concern for the welfare of the masses is criticized. God admonishes that we feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, house the homeless, visit the sick, visit the prisoners, give hope to the hopeless (Mathew 25:35 - 36). This calls for the attention of the state government whose obligation is to take care of the less privilege, physically challenged, the aged, street beggars, the destitute. Philanthropists should also help to make life meaningfully better by giving scholarships to the poor. Certain shabby conditions should be reformed in the medical, educational, environmental, political, prison, security sectors, schools be made to improve and develop the standards of the living for the poor. Such strife, commotions and rivalry amongst people, religion and politics are totally avoided for peace and unity to reign. No act of kindness is ever wasted. Our prime purpose in life is to help others. Life's most difficult task is 'to have no burden to carry'. We have two hands. The first is to help ourselves and the second is to help others. One has to do something for somebody everyday for which he or she does not get paid for. For if we light a lamp for somebody, we will also brighten our path. We should spread our nest and shelter others. [9], quotes Brian Tracy, 'Successful people are always looking for opportunity to help others'. Unsuccessful people are always asking, 'What's in it for me'? Ray Kroc dropped this diamond, 'the more I help others to succeed, the more I succeed and Martin Luther King Jnr. quipped with this question, 'Life's most urgent question is, what are you

doing for others'? Let our fortune help others. People helping people make the world a better place.

- [15], asserts that Life is not about getting from people, but it is about giving out to people- reaching out to them. Life is about service, not status; it is about sacrifice not surplus .It is about giving not receiving. When you stop contributions to your world, you are no longer living,you are merely existing Stones exist but have no life, because they do not make any contributions of their own. Life is about contribution not consumption; it is about relevance not significance.

From the poem '**E Nwela M N'Ozu**', one observes that it is vital that we maintain feelings of family support with the elderly because this improves the quality of life of older people. For example helping with house chores, providing simple companionship family visits or attention. This is important so that the elderly will not fall into depression or feel all alone. A big part of any elder care program is to give emotional support. This can improve life expectancy by several years and create a more positive and optimistic environment for the aged. We need to care and show compassion to the less privileged and those who are victims of unjust oppression. Christians and government can do a lot to change the face of hunger in the society like visiting hospitals, orphanages, rural schools, herbal homes. Some have no food, water, clothes, houses, roads. Some are malnourished; some people live with open wounds for years without treatments. We need to open our eyes to the plight of the poor and needy and offer help to them so that there will not be such a huge gap between the poor and the rich. Good health is life therefore the citizens should be made to be aware of the need to go for free tests on health issues like prostate, cervical cancer screening exercises in order to reduce the mortality rate in the society.

Government should also learn from other countries and pay pensions to retired workers without hassles. The present system of screening pensioners is creating sufferings for our aged parents. Government should ensure that they are appropriated funds are expeditiously who served the country from destitution and early graves. released. That is the least that can be done for those who did not steal but worked meritoriously, believing that their pension would come there way after service. We have a moral obligation to save our aged Many have died waiting for their pensions. All these measures can help rescue man from the ashes of rejection and reject. We live in a culture of hypocrisy. We need to value life before death. Love people when they are alive and show kindness now that they need it.

To direct more attention to the study of Igbo poetry in Nigeria, students should be asked to read original contemporary poems. The exercise will help them to gain belief in themselves as creators as they put their mind in action, they would realize that creativity is a potential ability of everybody. As they practice this, have them to write their own short poems by their own style and originality. Have them capture the picture in words because the language of poetry is witty, boned with ideas, loaded with deep meanings though condensed and short, knitted with emotions. As they feel poetry, they learn and feel the power of words. In awaking the interest of reading and writing poetry, the creativity is transferred and also expressed in the classroom and other related studies in their educational pursuits, thereby enhancing teaching and learning.

### CONCLUSION

With the expositions from these selected poems, the masses' consciousness is raised to the anomalous situations prevalent in society, as leaders are unconcerned to the plight of the people. These glaring anomalies are part of the factor that militates against the equitable growth of a nation and its people. Thus, much is expected of the poet, like a preacher and other patriots not to turn away their faces from such anomalous situation but to raise the consciousness and mobilize the people until the society is to a greater extent free. It is also hoped that the recommended measures will help create and usher in a new order that can positively, reposition the society.

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