

# Prevalence of Betrayal in *Betrayal in the City* by Francis Imbuga and *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare

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**Abstract:** Betrayal stands as motifs recurrently explored across literary works throughout history. Across diverse literary genres, authors have extensively discussed betrayal and justice, illuminating their psychological impacts and broader societal implications. While numerous studies have been conducted on the theme of betrayal in literature, there remains inadequate knowledge regarding their psychological effects in specific texts such as *Betrayal in the City* by Francis Imbuga and *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare. The current study sought to bridge this gap by conducting a critical analysis of betrayal in the aforementioned texts. The study employed reader response theory, to guide the analysis. The researcher employed descriptive research design, where qualitative data was gathered using intensive reading of the texts which were purposively sampled. Thematic analysis was used to analyse and present the obtained data. The findings indicated that in *Betrayal in the City*, betrayal is evident through the government's suppression of cultural practices, Juser's ostracism by students, Mulili's betrayal of friends, and Tumbo's failure to protect Regina. Betrayal is also central in Shakespeare's work, *Hamlet*, with Claudius's murder of King Hamlet disrupting the natural order, Hamlet's quest for revenge, and various betrayals leading to moral and political instability. The study concluded that betrayal is a central theme in both *Betrayal in the City* and *Hamlet*, manifesting through personal and political actions that disrupt societal and moral order.

**Keywords:** Prevalence, Betrayal, Hamlet, Revenge, Shakespeare, Imbuga.

## 1. Introduction

Betrayal is a powerful theme in literature, often used to explore complex human emotions, relationships, and moral dilemmas. It occurs when a character's trust is broken, leading to personal conflict, emotional pain, and often a desire for revenge or justice. In literary works, betrayal adds depth to narratives by revealing hidden motives, weaknesses, and vulnerabilities, which shape character development and propel plot progression. Through acts of betrayal, authors highlight universal themes of loyalty, deception, and the cost of ambition or power. This theme resonates with readers as it reflects real-life experiences, making betrayal a compelling tool for authors to engage audiences and emphasize the moral or social implications of trust and disloyalty.

Betrayal resonates deeply as a narrative tool, revealing the layers of human relationships (Kharbe, 2023). It emerges in various forms, spanning across human experience—from the intimate bonds of friendship and love to the complex dynamics of familial and societal allegiances. In ancient Greek tragedies like "Medea" by Euripides and "Oedipus Rex" by Sophocles, betrayal weaves a tangled web of deceit and tragedy, driving characters to confront their deepest fears and desires. The treachery of Medea towards Jason and Oedipus's unwitting betrayal of his own family underscore the timeless allure of betrayal as a catalyst for conflict and self-discovery.

In Shakespearean drama, betrayal takes center stage, propelling characters into moral quandaries and existential crises. In "Othello," the betrayal orchestrated by Iago against the noble Moor Othello serves as a chilling reminder of the corrosive power of jealousy and manipulation. Similarly, in "King Lear," the betrayal of familial trust and filial piety leads to tragic consequences, as Lear grapples with the betrayal of his daughters and the erosion of his sanity. Shakespeare's exploration of betrayal resonates with audiences across centuries, illuminating the dark recesses of human nature and the fragility of trust.

In more contemporary works, betrayal continues to captivate readers, offering insights into the complexities of modern relationships and societal dynamics. In George Orwell's "1984," Philip (2023) argues that the protagonist Winston experiences betrayal at the hands of his lover Julia and the oppressive regime of Big Brother, highlighting the pervasive influence of betrayal in dystopian societies. Similarly, in Khaled Hosseini's "The Kite Runner," the betrayal of childhood friends Amir and Hassan reverberates through generations, underscoring the enduring impact of betrayal on personal identity and moral integrity. Regardless of its form or context, betrayal in literature serves as a reminder of the vulnerability of human connections. Whether motivated by ambition, jealousy, or survival, betrayals in literary works expose the complexities of human nature and the delicate balance of trust and loyalty (Kody and Brooks, 2023).

Betrayal, whether by loved ones, authorities, or societal

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structures, can inflict profound emotional wounds on characters, leading to feelings of anger, mistrust, and existential disillusionment (Jamieson, 2020). In Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's novel "A Grain of Wheat," characters such as Mugo and Gikonyo confront the betrayal of comrades and community members during the Mau Mau uprising, leading to profound psychological turmoil and moral ambiguity. The betrayal of trust not only undermines interpersonal relationships but also challenges characters' sense of identity and purpose, prompting existential crises and moral reckoning. The psychological effects of betrayal and revenge are often exacerbated by the socio-political context in which characters exist. In East African and Kenyan literature, characters confront systemic injustices, political upheaval, and social upheaval, which compound the psychological trauma of betrayal and revenge.

In *Betrayal in the City*, Francis Imbuga, a prominent Kenyan playwright, explores the political and social landscape of an unnamed African country plagued by corruption, dictatorship, and betrayal. The play centers around the character of Doga, a university lecturer and intellectual who becomes embroiled in a web of political intrigue and betrayal. Through Doga's struggles, Imbuga vividly portrays the devastating consequences of betrayal on individuals and society at large, highlighting the erosion of trust, morality, and justice in a corrupt and oppressive regime.

Similarly, William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is a renowned tragedy that explores themes of betrayal, revenge, and justice within the royal court of Denmark. The play follows Prince Hamlet as he grapples with the aftermath of his father's suspicious death and his mother's hasty marriage to his uncle Claudius. Hamlet's internal conflict and quest for truth and justice propel the narrative, leading to a series of tragic events that reverberate throughout the kingdom. Through the complex interplay of characters and their moral dilemmas, Shakespeare delves into the psychological depths of human nature, offering profound insights into the consequences of betrayal and the pursuit of retribution. Despite originating from different cultural backgrounds and historical contexts, these texts offer portrayal of betrayal's corrosive impact on individuals and societies, the complexities of seeking revenge in the face of injustice, and the elusive nature of justice.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

The current study sought to be guided by reader response theory. Reader-Response Theory, pioneered by Louise Rosenblatt in the mid-20th century, emphasizes the active role of the reader in constructing meaning from literary texts. Rosenblatt proposed that the meaning of a text is not fixed or inherent but is instead created through the dynamic interaction between the reader and the text. According to Reader-Response Theory, readers bring their own experiences, beliefs, and emotions to the reading process, influencing their interpretation and understanding of the text. This theory challenges the notion of a single, authoritative interpretation of a text, suggesting instead that there are multiple valid interpretations based on individual readers' perspectives.

Central to Reader-Response Theory is the idea of subjective

interpretation, which asserts that meaning is not predetermined within the text but is constructed by the reader. Readers actively engage with the text, bringing their own backgrounds, values, and emotions to the reading experience. As readers interact with the text, they create meaning through their responses, interpretations, and emotional reactions. Reader-Response Theory also emphasizes the multiplicity of interpretations, acknowledging that different readers may interpret the same text in diverse ways based on their individual perspectives. By exploring the reader's role in the construction of meaning, Reader-Response Theory offers valuable insights into the diversity of reader experiences and interpretations of literary texts, enriching our understanding of literature as a dynamic and interactive process. This theory has several tenets which were crucial in the current study;

### A. Subjective Interpretation

This tenet posits that meaning is not fixed within a text but is constructed by the reader based on their personal experiences and perspectives. In the context of examining the prevalence of betrayal in "Betrayal in the City" and "Hamlet," Subjective Interpretation aided in the analysis by allowing researchers to consider how readers interpret and perceive instances of betrayal differently. Readers may identify various acts of betrayal within the texts based on their own subjective experiences and moral frameworks. For instance, one reader may view a character's actions as betraying a friendship, while another may interpret the same actions as a justified response to a perceived threat. By acknowledging the subjective nature of interpretation, researchers can gain insights into the diverse ways in which betrayal is perceived and understood by readers, enriching the analysis of its prevalence within the narratives.

## 3. Materials and Methods

The study employed a descriptive research design, focusing on gathering and analyzing qualitative data. This approach involves detailed examination and description of the prevalence of betrayal, elements of revenge and justice, and the effects of betrayal and revenge on the characters within the selected texts. A research design serves as a detailed plan encompassing the organization, structure, and systematic approach to investigation (Kothari, 2004). The study employed purposive sampling, a method of selecting specific themes of betrayal and revenge from "Betrayal in the City" by Francis Imbuga and "Hamlet" by William Shakespeare (Suri, 2011). By purposively sampling these themes, the researcher ensures that the chosen aspects align closely with the study's objectives, thus providing comprehensive data for analysis. This approach allows for a deliberate and targeted selection of themes that best represent the focus of the study, facilitating a thorough examination of the prevalence of betrayal, elements of revenge and justice, and the effects of betrayal and revenge on characters within the narratives. The primary instrument for data collection in this study was textual analysis, conducted through intensive reading of the selected texts. The researcher engaged in a thorough examination of the texts, highlighting key sections, passages, and themes relevant to the study's objective; the prevalence of

betrayal. In this study, thematic analysis was applied to the textual data collected from the selected works. Through a process of coding and categorization, themes were systematically organized and interpreted to provide insights into the prevalence and significance of these themes within the narratives.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

Betrayal as a key theme in literature, reflects the socio-political dynamics and human relationships of the period in which the works were written. During and before the colonial period, betrayal was not only a personal act but also a metaphor for larger societal and political treacheries. In pre-colonial literature, betrayal is frequently portrayed within familial and communal contexts. In many African oral traditions, stories often revolve around themes of loyalty and betrayal, underscoring the importance of social cohesion and trust within communities. Betrayal in these narratives typically results in severe consequences, reflecting the high value placed on communal harmony and trust. Finnegan (1970) highlights the significance of oral literature in her work, noting that these stories were essential in teaching moral values and maintaining social order. Colonial literature frequently depicts characters who betray their own people, either by aligning with colonial powers or by abandoning traditional values. This betrayal is often portrayed as a tragedy, leading to social fragmentation and loss of cultural identity. In Western literature, themes of betrayal during the colonial period also reflect the moral and ethical dilemmas faced by individuals caught between loyalty to their nation and their personal moral compass. Shakespeare's works explore betrayal in the context of political power struggles, personal jealousy, and ambition.

In the context of *Betrayal in the City* by Francis Imbuga and *Hamlet* by Shakespeare, betrayal was found to be an outstanding theme depicted in numerous scenes as presented below.

##### A. *Betrayal in Betrayal in the City* by Francis Imbuga

Francis Imbuga has presented numerous cases of betrayal in his play, "Betrayal in the City." One significant instance is the government's decision to cancel the traditional ceremony organized by Nina and Doga. This act represents a profound betrayal of cultural practices and traditions. The cancellation not only disrespects the memory of their deceased son but also undermines the community's heritage and the solemn rites that give meaning to their lives.

*"...NINA: (Praying.) Father, Maker of all that crawl and all that fly, we are dry of words, but we put this day in your hands. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Saviour Amen.*

*(Jere and Mulili enter, the latter carries a bottle a beer, from which he will drink every now and then.)*

*JERE: Old people, you waste your time. There is to be no ceremony.*

*MULILI: No ceremony! That the final.*

*DOGA: A shaving ceremony is no child's play...*

*JERE: The ceremony is canceled in the interest of peace..."*

As seen in this extract, the shaving ceremony, a significant

cultural ritual, is dismissed in the interest of peace, showcasing the government's disregard for cultural norms and traditions. The dialogue highlights the tension between the government and the people. Jere and Mulili, representing the government's authority, bluntly inform the elders that the ceremony will not take place. Doga's protest, emphasizing that "a shaving ceremony is no child's play," underscores the importance of this ritual. However, Jere's insistence that it is "canceled in the interest of peace" reveals the government's prioritization of political stability over cultural heritage. This moment reflects how the government imposes its power, disregarding the people's cultural values and practices.

This betrayal by the government illustrates a broader theme of cultural suppression and the erosion of traditional values in the face of political control. Scholar Michael Etherton argues that such actions reflect a colonial mindset, where indigenous practices are often marginalized or suppressed to maintain control. In this context, the cancellation of the shaving ceremony is not just a simple administrative decision but a profound betrayal of the community's identity and heritage. By undermining these cultural practices, the government alienates the people, deepening the divide between the rulers and the ruled. This act of betrayal highlights the broader conflicts in the play, where political authority clashes with cultural and social values, leading to a loss of identity and trust among the people.

Governments worldwide often betray their people's cultural practices, leading to cultural erosion. This betrayal can occur through policies that suppress traditional rituals, languages, or customs in favor of modernization or political control. For instance, the forced assimilation policies in Australia, which aimed to integrate Aboriginal children into Western culture, significantly eroded indigenous traditions and languages. Similarly, studies like those by Fischer (2013) highlight how China's policies in Tibet have undermined local religious practices and cultural expressions, prioritizing political stability over cultural preservation. Such actions not only diminish cultural diversity but also create a sense of loss and identity crisis among the affected communities, as their traditional ways of life are systematically devalued and suppressed by government interventions.

The character Juser's experience with his fellow students sheds light on personal betrayal within the broader context of political activism. His peers, who once supported him, now label him a traitor and betrayer of their cause, leading to his isolation. Juser expresses a desire to prove his commitment through the success of a play, hoping to demonstrate that determination is more valuable than sheer numbers in overcoming problems. Juser's situation shows the difficulties of loyalty and trust in political movements. His fellow students' choice to exclude him shows how easily alliances can break when betrayal is suspected. Their mistrust implies that Juser's actions, or his perceived instability, clashed with their shared goals. By calling him a traitor, they dismiss his efforts and isolate him, demonstrating how quickly unity can fall apart under suspicion and doubt.

Juser's determination to prove himself through the success of a play shows his strength and belief in the power of

individual effort. This is different from the students' focus on working together as a group. Juser's experience shows that personal betrayal can drive someone to prove their value and loyalty. His story makes the audience think about the complex nature of activism, where personal beliefs and public opinions can conflict, causing internal struggles within movements. According to Reader Response Theory, the interpretation of Juser's betrayal is influenced by the readers' own experiences and perceptions. Readers might empathize with Juser, viewing him as a misunderstood and wronged individual, or they might side with the students, seeing his actions as genuinely harmful to their cause.

In the climactic scene of Francis Imbuga's play *Betrayal in the City*, Mulili betrays Boss, the very authority figure he has long supported. The dialogue reveals Mulili's sudden shift in loyalty as he lists the reasons for Boss's downfall.

*MULILI: Kabisa! One, he take everything in his hand. Two, he spoil the economic of Kafira. Three, he rule too long. Change is like rest. Four he kill Kabito.*

*BOSS: Am I hearing right? Mulili? (To Jere.) Shoot me. Spare me this betrayal. Shoot me!*

Mulili's betrayal of Boss is a critical turning point in the play, highlighting the fragility of loyalty built on personal gain and power. Mulili, who had been a staunch supporter and enforcer for Boss, suddenly condemns him, listing Boss's faults and abuses of power. Throughout the play, Mulili has benefited significantly from his relationship with Boss, winning lucrative milk tenders and acting as Boss's right-hand man. Boss trusted Mulili implicitly, often taking his word as the bare truth. This shift suggests that Mulili's loyalty was never genuine but rather opportunistic. His decision to betray Boss when it suits him underscores the theme of self-preservation and the inherent instability within corrupt systems of power. Mulili's accusations also reflect the public sentiment against Boss, who is blamed for economic mismanagement, prolonged dictatorship, and political killings.

This scene highlights the main themes of the play, including betrayal and the ongoing power struggles in a repressive society. By showing Mulili's betrayal, Imbuga underscores the inevitable fall of leaders who use exploitation and violence to maintain their power. This act of betrayal reminds us that those who commit injustices may eventually face the same betrayal they have caused. It adds to the drama of the story and reinforces the idea that power can corrupt and that true loyalty is rare in a corrupt system. In literary works, it is common to find instances where servants or close aides who attach themselves to leadership due to personal benefits eventually betray their leaders. Scholars have noted that such characters often align themselves with those in power to gain privileges or improve their status, only to turn against them when it becomes advantageous.

Boss is depicted as a leader who consistently betrays the people of Kafira by putting his own interests above those of his citizens and maintaining an oppressive regime.

*"...Mulili: He takes everything in his hand...He spoil the economic of Kafira...He rule too long..."*

This is evident when Mulili is conflicted by Juser, and in

defence, betrays Boss. Although he did it to save his skin, this betrayal can be interpreted to understand the kind of regime that rules over Kafira. Boss's actions reflect a pattern of exploitation and mismanagement. By monopolizing control and ignoring the economic and social needs of Kafira, he undermines the country's development and stability. Mulili's observation that Boss "spoils the economy" suggests that the leader's policies and practices have led to economic decline, which negatively impacts the lives of ordinary people. The criticism of his prolonged rule indicates a lack of accountability and a persistent failure to address or remedy the problems facing the nation.

His prioritization of personal interests over public welfare creates a power imbalance, leading to widespread suffering and disillusionment among the people. By ruling for an extended period without making meaningful improvements, Boss not only fails to advance Kafira but also entrenches his own power at the expense of societal progress. This portrayal in the play serves as a critique of corrupt leadership and highlights the consequences of failing to serve the public good. Authors, such as Francis Imbuga, use their works to expose how corrupt leaders prioritize personal gain over the welfare of their people, leading to widespread poverty, injustice, and suffering. By portraying the detrimental effects of corruption on everyday life, authors aim to raise awareness and provoke thought about the need for accountability and ethical governance (Adams, 2004). Through characters and narratives, they illustrate the abuse of power, the erosion of trust, and the stifling of progress that result from corrupt regimes, ultimately advocating for change and better leadership.

Mulili betrays his colleague Jere by reporting him to Boss after Jere endorsed the shaving ceremony for Doga and Nina. Despite Jere's efforts to support the old couple and oppose the farmer's cruelty, Mulili's loyalty to Boss leads him to betray Jere.

*JERE: ... mulili, if you still have even the smallest part of your original human heart, let us allow these people to carry on with the ceremony... Boss will not know.*

*MULILI: ...my future depend on this...if I keep law and order, a big farmer I become when I retired. Bos promise me that you know..I be his eye and his ear here. I say no ceremony...*

*JERE: Then I did wrong. I let you get away with it. I saved you.*

*JERE: When you let Mustafa escape, did I open my mouth? Why should we not allow these two to perform a harmless ceremony for their dead in that same spirit?...Then I'll do it alone. I shall go to the village and announce that the ceremony is on.*

*MULILI: You Jokes. You expects me to quiet about it?*

*JERE: Get out of my sight! (Aims a pistol at him.)*

*MULILI: Hey you, what you thinks you do? You shall pays for it!*

Mulili, driven by personal gain and a promise from Boss of a prosperous future, disregards their friendship and ensures Jere gets into trouble. This act of betrayal highlights Mulili's callous nature and his willingness to sacrifice others for his own benefit. The interaction between Jere and Mulili reveals deep themes of betrayal and the corrupting influence of power. Jere's

appeal to Mulili's humanity and their past camaraderie is met with a cold and self-serving response. Mulili's decision to report Jere despite their shared history underscores the extent of his moral degradation. The promise of becoming a big farmer upon retirement blinds Mulili to the ethical implications of his actions. His betrayal is not just a personal affront to Jere but also a broader commentary on how individuals in power can become corrupt and forsake their principles for personal gain. The scene also emphasizes the theme of power dynamics and the sacrifices individuals make to secure their positions within a corrupt system. After this encounter, Jere is arrested and locked in prison without trial. His imprisonment following his attempt to stand up for what is right contrasts sharply with Mulili's opportunism, highlighting the tragic consequences of betrayal and the cost of integrity in a corrupt society.

Tumbo betrays Regina's trust by failing to disclose Boss's true intentions during her appointment to petition for Mosese's release. Tumbo assures Regina that seeing Boss herself is necessary for her brother's freedom, but he does not inform her that Boss has ulterior, amorous motives. This deception leads Regina into a dangerous situation where she must escape from Boss's advances by jumping out of a ten-foot-high window. Tumbo's betrayal lies in his deliberate omission of the risks involved, exposing Regina to harm and violating her trust in his guidance. Those in power, such as Boss, use their positions to sexually exploit individuals from the lower class, exemplified by Regina's experience. Boss, leveraging his authority, manipulates Regina's desperation to free her brother Mosese, presenting an opportunity that disguises his true intentions. This abuse of power underscores the deep-seated corruption and moral decay within the ruling class, where personal gain and desires take precedence over ethical conduct and respect for human dignity.

Boss's betrayal extends to his wife, who trusts him to maintain their marital fidelity and integrity. Boss's plan to bring Regina into their home under false pretenses demonstrates his disregard for his wife's feelings and their marital vows. When his wife protests and confronts him about his intentions, her trust is further shattered as she is treated harshly and thrown into a cell like a common criminal. This act underscores the extent of Boss's betrayal, not only towards Regina but also towards his wife, whom he subjects to humiliation and injustice.

Another incident of betrayal occurs when Mulili betrays Kabito, a fellow member of the entertainment committee, to Boss. During an argument that ensues in the committee, Mulili misinterprets a statement made by Kabito, and assumes it's an insult. Mulili fabricates reasons to get rid of Kabito. He falsely accuses Kabito of claiming that Boss has robbed him of the milk tender, ruined the economy, hidden millions in foreign countries, and attempted to force himself on Regina. These outrageous allegations lead to Kabito's death, orchestrated by Mulili. By doing so, Mulili not only eliminates a perceived rival but also demonstrates his willingness to use deceit and betrayal to achieve his goals.

The accusations he levels against Kabito are not only false but are designed to provoke Boss's anger and justify extreme measures. This action reveals the dangerous dynamics of power

and betrayal within the ruling elite, where personal vendettas and political survival override truth and loyalty. This incident also reflects the theme of betrayal that runs throughout the play, where individuals are sacrificed for political advantage and personal advancement. By having Kabito killed, Mulili not only silences a potential critic but also reinforces his loyalty to Boss, showcasing the ruthless measures taken to maintain power.

#### 1) *Betrayal in Hamlet by William Shakespeare*

Shakespeare's play also explores betrayal as a central theme, with characters such as Claudius. The treachery in "Hamlet" reveals the corrupting influence of power and the devastating effects of deceit on relationships and moral integrity. Claudius's murder of his brother, King Hamlet, is the most serious act of betrayal in the play. By killing the rightful king, Claudius usurps the throne of Denmark and marries the queen, Gertrude. This act not only destroys the natural order but also introduces corruption at the highest level of the state. Claudius's betrayal is driven by his ambition and desire for power, showing his willingness to commit the most heinous of crimes to achieve his goals. This betrayal is vividly illustrated where a poisoner sneaks in after the queen had left the room, and pour poison into the King's year, leading to his death.

*"...comes in a fellow, takes off his crown, kisses it, and pours poison in the King's ears, and exit. The Queen returns; finds the King dead, and makes passionate action. The Poisoner, with some two or three Mutes, comes in again, seeming to lament with her..."*

Claudius's betrayal robs Prince Hamlet of his rightful position as king, which creates a central conflict in the play. Hamlet is not only grieving his father's death but is also tormented by the knowledge that his uncle is the murderer. This revelation propels Hamlet into a deep moral and existential crisis, as he grapples with the need for revenge and the corrupt nature of the new king. The play-within-a-play is a strategic move by Hamlet to confirm Claudius's guilt, as the reenactment of the murder forces Claudius to reveal his conscience through his reaction.

The consequences of Claudius's betrayal extend beyond the personal anguish of Hamlet and into the wider realm of the Danish court. The throne is now occupied by a man who attained power through treachery, leading to a reign characterized by corruption and deceit. This usurpation undermines the legitimacy of the monarchy and casts a shadow of moral decay over Denmark. Claudius's act of betrayal initiates a series of tragic events, ultimately leading to the downfall of the royal family and the state's collapse, highlighting the destructive power of betrayal on both personal and political levels.

The destructive power of betrayal has been a recurring theme throughout history, often leading to the downfall of entire kingdoms. Farrell (2015) observes that betrayal within the ranks of leadership is particularly catastrophic because it erodes the trust and stability necessary for a kingdom to thrive. Betrayal by power-hungry individuals creates internal conflicts, weakens the authority of the legitimate ruler, and can incite civil unrest or rebellion. Historian David Chandler highlights how the betrayal of leaders by their closest advisors or allies has

repeatedly led to significant political upheavals and the eventual collapse of empires, such as the fall of the Roman Empire and the disintegration of the Mongol Empire (Barlowe, 2013).

Betrayal deeply hurts Prince Hamlet when he learns that his uncle Claudius has murdered his father, the king. This act of treachery is revealed to Hamlet by the ghost of his father who declares; "...*The serpent that did sting thy father's life / Now wears his crown...*". The knowledge that his father's death was not natural but a cold-blooded murder by a close family member plunges Hamlet into a state of emotional turmoil and moral confusion. Hamlet's trust in those around him is shattered, leading him to question the loyalty and integrity of everyone at court. This sense of betrayal becomes a driving force behind Hamlet's actions throughout the play, fueling his desire for revenge and justice. Hamlet's quest to expose his uncle's crime and seek vengeance results in increased tension and conflict within the royal family and the court. The act of betrayal not only destroys the bond between Hamlet and Claudius but also creates a ripple effect of mistrust, deceit, and violence. Claudius's treachery ultimately leads to his own downfall, as well as the demise of Hamlet and other innocent characters, illustrating the destructive power of betrayal.

Gertrude's marriage to Claudius is seen as a betrayal by Hamlet. Hamlet, who is still mourning his father's death, feels deeply hurt and angry when his mother quickly remarries Claudius, his uncle. This marriage feels like a personal betrayal to Hamlet, as he believes it shows a lack of respect for his late father. Hamlet's feelings are evident when he confronts Gertrude, showing disapproval and pain caused by her actions.

*"...Mother, you have my father much offended... You are the queen, your husband's wife ..."*

Gertrude's decision to marry Claudius also represents a betrayal to the late King Hamlet. By marrying her former husband's brother, she breaks the bond of loyalty and love she had with the deceased king. This act not only dishonors King Hamlet's memory but also raises questions about Gertrude's motivations and loyalty. Hamlet interprets this marriage as a moral failing and feels that his mother has not only wronged him but also dishonored his father's legacy (Mosley, 2017). This betrayal has a significant impact on the play's events and Hamlet's actions. It adds to Hamlet's emotional turmoil and fuels his desire for revenge against Claudius. It contributes to Hamlet's feelings of isolation and mistrust, further complicating his relationships with those around him.

Queen Gertrude betrays the late King Hamlet by defending Claudius when Laertes accuses him of killing his father, Polonius. When Laertes demands to know the whereabouts of his father, Claudius tells him bluntly that Polonius is dead. Gertrude quickly interjects, saying, "But not by him," to protect Claudius. This defense of Claudius demonstrates Gertrude's loyalty to her new husband over the memory of her deceased husband, King Hamlet. According to Kavanagh (2019), by defending Claudius, Gertrude aligns herself with the man who not only killed her former husband but also usurped the throne. Her actions can be seen as a betrayal to the late King Hamlet because she chooses to support his murderer. This moment

illustrates the complexity of Gertrude's character and her possible ignorance or denial of Claudius's true nature. It also highlights the tangled web of deceit and betrayal that permeates the court, as Gertrude's defense adds another layer of complication to the already fraught relationships.

Hamlet's delay in avenging his father's murder can be seen as a betrayal of his father's ghost. The ghost of King Hamlet urges his son to seek immediate revenge on Claudius, but Hamlet hesitates. Instead of taking swift action, Hamlet spends much of the play contemplating whether or not he should kill Claudius. This hesitation is highlighted when the ghost reappears, expressing its frustration with Hamlet's inaction and serves as a reminder of Hamlet's promise.

*"...Do not forget: this visitation is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose..."*

Hamlet's indecision is driven by his philosophical and moral dilemmas. He grapples with the idea of murder and its consequences, questioning the morality of his actions. This contemplation leads to further delay, which can be seen as a form of betrayal to his father's memory and wishes. By not acting immediately, Hamlet allows the corruption in the court to continue, which results in additional suffering and death. His failure to act decisively not only betrays the ghost's command but also prolongs the chaos in Denmark.

Additionally, Hamlet's harsh treatment of his mother, Queen Gertrude, is another form of betrayal. The ghost specifically asked Hamlet to spare his mother and not to harm her: "Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive against thy mother aught." Despite this, Hamlet confronts Gertrude violently, accusing her of betrayal and moral corruption. This causes her great distress, which goes against the ghost's wishes to protect her from further pain. Thus, Hamlet's actions towards Gertrude represent a significant deviation from the ghost's instructions, highlighting the theme of betrayal within the play.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, former schoolmates and friends of Hamlet, play a significant role in the theme of betrayal. Initially, Hamlet trusts them with the truth about his feigned madness. However, they soon shift their loyalty to King Claudius, who uses them to spy on Hamlet and report his actions back to the court. This initial act of betrayal shows how Rosencrantz and Guildenstern prioritize their loyalty to the king over their friendship with Hamlet.

As the plot progresses, their betrayal deepens. Claudius sends Hamlet to England with a sealed letter carried by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Unknown to Hamlet, the letter orders his execution upon arrival. This decision by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to follow Claudius's orders and lead Hamlet to his death marks the ultimate betrayal of their friendship. It demonstrates their willingness to sacrifice Hamlet to secure their own safety and favor with the king. Hamlet discovers the plot and manages to alter the letter, resulting in the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern instead. Their betrayal not only fails but also leads to their own demise. This outcome underscores the destructive nature of betrayal, as their disloyalty ultimately costs them their lives.

King Claudius's betrayal of Queen Gertrude is evident through his actions during the final scenes of the play. Claudius

arranges a duel between Laertes and Hamlet, using a poisoned sword to ensure Hamlet's death. He also prepares a poisoned cup of wine for Hamlet, but Gertrude, unaware of the danger, drinks from it. Claudius's failure to warn her and his inaction as she drinks the poisoned wine reveals his betrayal. The extract "...It is the poison'd cup; it is too late.." shows that Claudius's deceit leads to her death, highlighting his betrayal of Gertrude's trust and love.

Claudius's betrayal is not only physical but emotional. He knows how much Gertrude loves her son, Hamlet. By plotting to kill Hamlet, Claudius indirectly endangers Gertrude's life, knowing that her grief over her son's death would be overwhelming. The plan to murder Hamlet and his failure to prevent Gertrude from drinking the poisoned wine demonstrate his disregard for her well-being. This act reflects a deep level of betrayal, as Claudius prioritizes his own power and survival over the safety and feelings of his queen.

### 5. Conclusion

Based on the above findings, the study concluded that betrayal manifests through various acts that reflect the corruption and moral decay in Kafira. The government undermines cultural practices, students betray Juser, and Mulili betrays Jere and Kabito, all highlighting the personal and societal consequences of betrayal. Similarly, in "Hamlet," betrayal is a central theme, with Claudius's murder of King Hamlet disrupting the natural order and sparking a chain of events that leads to further betrayals and moral crises. The

betrayals experienced by characters like Hamlet and Gertrude highlight the personal and political ramifications of deceit and disloyalty.

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