

**A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL INJUSTICE IN TWO SELECTED EAST
AFRICAN PLAYS**

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL
SCIENCES IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTERS OF ARTS IN LITERATURE IN ENGLISH OF
MOUNT KENYA UNIVERSITY**

JULY 2025

DECLARATION AND APPROVAL

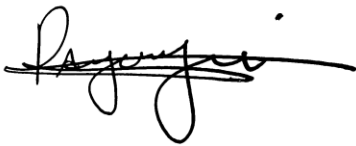
Declaration by the student

This project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University or for any other award.

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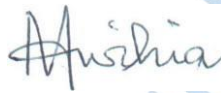
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who supported me throughout this project. Primarily, to my parents, Stephen and Sarah, thank you for your unwavering love, guidance and encouragement. Your support has been the foundation of my strength and I am deeply grateful for everything you have done for me. To my siblings: Humphrey, Johnstone, Godfrey, Elphas, Miriam, Leah and Petrunila-your love, motivation and constant inspiration have been a guiding light in my life. I am forever thankful for the bond we share. I would also like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Margaret Njoki Mwhia, for her invaluable mentorship. Your expertise and guidance were critical to the success of this project and I am truly grateful for your support. Finally, I am eternally thankful to God for His guidance and strength throughout this journey. Thank you all for believing in me and supporting me in so many ways.



ABSTRACT

This project, *A Critical Analysis of Social Injustice in Two Selected East African Plays*, critically analyzed the theme of social injustice as portrayed in *The Floods* by John Ruganda and *Inheritance* by David Mulwa. These plays were selected for their vivid depiction of social inequality, particularly issues of corruption, class struggles and oppression. The study explored how social injustice was represented in *Inheritance* and *The Floods*, identifying the social injustices portrayed in these works and examining how these representations shaped the central messages conveyed by the playwrights. The project focused on how the playwrights depicted corruption, class struggles, resistance and oppression, specifically analyzing how these injustices influenced character development and plot progression. Social Conflict Theory, particularly Marxist principles, served as the guiding framework for this analysis. This theoretical approach enabled the exploration of how class struggles, oppression, resistance and corruption were dramatized in both plays. Additionally, the study investigated how the playwrights critiqued social injustice through symbolic elements such as representations of leaders, the oppressed classes and institutions of power. By examining the conflict between the ruling elites and marginalized groups, the analysis revealed how these dynamics reflected broader struggles within East African societies. A qualitative approach was employed, focusing on detailed textual analysis, thematic coding and discourse analysis to identify recurring motifs of social injustice. The analysis highlighted how language and dialogue revealed underlying social justice dynamics, focusing on specific scenes, character arcs and literary techniques. The comparative analysis uncovered the distinct ways each playwright approached similar social issues, offering insight into their differing perspectives on social injustice. The findings contributed to a deeper understanding of how social injustice is portrayed and critiqued within East African plays, offering insights into the playwrights' commentary on social issues. This project engaged with broader discussions on social injustice in African literature, providing a comparative analysis of two seminal works and offering perspectives on the resonance of social inequality in contemporary East African society. The study also suggested directions for future research, particularly on the intersection of social justice and literature in East African contexts.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter began with the Background to the Study, followed by the Statement of the Problem then it outlined the Purpose of the Study. Later it discussed the Research Objectives and Research Questions. The chapter also included the Justification of the Study, the Significance of the Study and concluded with a discussion on the Scope and Limitations of the Study.

1.1 Background to the study

Incidents and acts of social injustice has long been a recurring theme in literature. The thematic exploration of how social injustice is portrayed in East African plays and its critical analysis is, therefore, worthy of attention. Social injustice is a vice that has existed since ancient times, as old as human literature itself (Rawls, 1971). The concept of social injustice dates back thousands of years. Evidence shows that philosophers such as Plato (427-347 BC), Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) had addressed issues related to social injustice (Dorius & Firebaugh, 2010).

Luigi Taparelli first used the term "social injustice" in 1840; he was an advisor to the Vatican, who argued that poor and disenfranchised people should be treated equally in society (Grieve et al., 2019). Since then, numerous cases of social injustice had prompted extensive analysis on the subject. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (2005) concurred that social injustice is a complex subject, arguing that it involved wrongful actions against individuals in society and intersected significantly with the fundamental principles of human rights.

The issue of social injustice, particularly when individuals are denied equal opportunities in society, has long been a thematic concern in literature (Dorius & Firebaugh, 2010). Many research studies and literary texts have emphasized social injustice, viewing it as a contemporary issue in the field of literature. In English literature, the theme of social injustice has been central, playing a significant role in classical antiquities, dramas and 19th-century European fiction.

For example, William Shakespeare addressed social injustice in Othello (1622), where the main character faced prejudice due to his ethnicity (Shakespeare, 1622).

Similarly, many plays by Sophocles, such as *Antigone* (441 BCE), focused on social injustice. In *Antigone*, King Creon enacted a law denying proper burial rites to anyone who invaded or betrayed Thebes. Antigone was harshly accused of being a traitor when she offered a proper burial to her fallen brother, Polynices (Sophocles, 441 BCE).

By the 20th century, social injustice had become a prominent theme in an increasing number of literary genres. While earlier analysis of social injustice in plays depicted it as a vice, in this century, it is viewed not only as a vice but also as a condition that needs to be condemned and eradicated (Rawls, 1971).

In Caribbean literature, major writers and poets, such as Kwame Dawes, have addressed social injustice extensively. In his poem *Dirt* (2013), Dawes highlighted how social injustice caused individuals to suffer, lose everything, face violence and be left with nothing (Dawes, 2013).

From the 20th century onwards, social injustice had taken a significant position in literature. African societies, particularly East African drama, reflected various shades of social injustice, as these societies had been riddled with injustice. From the days of colonialism to the post-independence era, East Africa has had to contend with various forms of injustice (Pavanelli, 2015). During the 12th Regional Conference for Africa and Arab Countries (AFRECON) in 2015, held in Gaborone, Botswana, Public Services International (PSI) General Secretary Rosa Pavanelli highlighted the African people's proud history of fighting against injustice, emphasizing that they continue to fight against the inequalities of today (Pavanelli, 2015).

Kithaka wa Mberia (2001) delved into social injustice and posited that it led to the suffering of citizens. Ibsen (2001) argued that when opportunities for nation building are taken away by a few, it brings suffering and pain to the masses. In the play, he called on the general populace to become aware of the injustices done to them and to fight back, warning that failure to do so would lead to further suffering (Ibsen, 2001). When individuals are discriminated against or wrongly denied opportunities, they often felt frustrated, manipulated and taken for granted.

These feelings could lead to increased aggression and a tendency to resort to violence in response to problems and confrontations, contributing to the prevalence of violent crime (Grieve et al., 2019).

John Rawls (1971) suggested that injustice could be understood as inequalities that failed to benefit all members of society. This perspective implied that injustice might be present in contexts where individuals are exploited or treated unfairly. Although social injustice had been explored in East African plays, there appeared to be limited scholarly attention focused on a comparative analysis of *Inheritance* by David Mulwa and *The Floods* by John Ruganda in relation to this theme. This gap in the literature highlighted the need for further research that examined both plays together to provide a deeper understanding of how social injustice was portrayed across these works. Additionally, social injustice might obstruct efforts toward building a more equitable society. This study addressed this gap by investigating the depiction of social injustice in these two selected East African plays.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Social injustice stands as a central and undeniable theme in East African literature, where existing studies by scholars had explored forms of social injustice such as dictatorship and corruption in Ruganda's and Mulwa's plays. Additionally, some scholars had also done comparative studies of East African plays. This project joined the others in adding more insight through a comparative analysis of corruption, class struggles, resistance and oppression through the characters in both plays. This study assessed how these two East African playwrights used the characters not only to depict but also to critique social injustice. The selected two plays, *Inheritance* by David Mulwa and *The Floods* by John Ruganda, were examined in regard to issues of corruption, class struggles, resistance and oppression. A reflection on injustices as challenges that needed to be addressed through East African literature was also established. The selected two plays were examined in regard to issues of class struggles, corruption, resistance and oppression. The study also portrayed how an understanding of these plays positioned them as critical reflections on social injustice realities in East African plays.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to critically analyze the portrayal of social injustice in *Inheritance* by David Mulwa and *The Floods* by John Ruganda. This project explored how the playwrights illustrated class struggles, corruption, resistance and oppression, and assessed the implications of these portrayals for understanding the plays' central themes. By examining these specific dimensions of social injustice, this study contributed to the existing body of knowledge in literary criticism, particularly within the context of East African plays. The findings offered insights into the ways in which these plays reflected and challenged contemporary social issues, enhancing the understanding of how East African literature engaged with ethical concerns related to social justice. This project aimed to demonstrate the relevance of the playwrights' perspectives in fostering dialogue about social inequalities and injustices, ultimately providing a foundation for future scholarship on the intersection of literature and social justice in the region.

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study were to:

- i. Critically examine the portrayal of social injustice in *Inheritance* by David Mulwa and *The Floods* by John Ruganda.
- ii. Examine the playwrights' perspectives on how the depiction of social injustice reveals the playwrights' insights on social injustice.
- iii. Assess the relevance of social injustice to the plays' central themes.

1.5 Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following questions:

- i. How is social injustice portrayed in *Inheritance* by David Mulwa and *The Floods* by John Ruganda?
- ii. What social injustices are portrayed in these plays?
- iii. How does the portrayal of social injustice shape the central messages conveyed by each play?

1.6 Justification of the Study

This study provided an in-depth analysis of social injustice as portrayed in two significant works by East African playwrights, one from Uganda and the other from Kenya. These plays offered important examples of how social injustice; corruption, class struggles, resistance and oppression; are represented in East African drama. Focusing on these specific works, the study examined how *Inheritance* and *The Floods* depicted social injustice through the lens of Social Conflict Theory, which emphasized the struggle between different social classes and the dynamics of power and inequality. Although scholars had previously researched social injustice in *Inheritance* and *The Floods*, this study contributed additional insights. The selected plays were chosen for their distinctive treatment of social injustice, each representing unique social and historical conditions in their respective countries. This comparative approach deepened the understanding of how different historical and cultural contexts informed the portrayal of power relations, inequality and social injustice in East African plays. The study contributed to the field by providing a more nuanced understanding of how East African playwrights use drama not only to represent but also to critique social injustice, offering a perspective on the intersection of literature and social justice in African literary contexts.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study contributed to the field of literary criticism by providing a critical analysis of how social injustice was represented in *Inheritance* by David Mulwa and *The Floods* by John Ruganda, using Social Conflict Theory. It offered insights into how East African playwrights depicted corruption, oppression, resistance and class struggles, while examining how these portrayals related to the central themes of the plays. While the primary focus was on East African drama, the findings had broader implications for understanding how literature addressed social injustice in diverse cultural and historical contexts. However, the study acknowledged that its conclusions were limited to the specific works analyzed and made no claims to generalize across all East African or global literature. In addition to its academic contributions, the study held practical significance. By demonstrating how literature reflects and critiques social injustice, the research provided valuable insights for educators, policymakers and social justice advocates interested in how creative works could influence societal change. These findings were

particularly relevant for those looking to incorporate literature into discussions on inequality, both in East Africa and in wider global contexts. The study opened avenues for interdisciplinary research by offering a foundation for future scholars interested in exploring the intersection between literature, sociology and political science. It contributed to the understanding of how literary representations of social injustice interacted with real-world social conflicts, potentially informing efforts to address inequality through cultural and artistic channels.

1.8 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study focused on analyzing social injustice as portrayed in *The Floods* (1980) by John Ruganda and *Inheritance* (2004) by David Mulwa, two notable East African playwrights. The research adopted Social Conflict Theory as its primary framework, exploring corruption, class struggles, resistance and oppression as they were depicted in these plays. The study sought to understand how these injustices were intertwined with broader political and social themes in the plays, contributing to their central messages. While the focus was on these two specific works, the study aimed to offer insights that could provide a foundation for understanding similar themes in other East African literature, though it did not directly extend to those other works or authors. This focus allowed for a detailed, in-depth analysis of the selected plays, while indirectly suggesting potential avenues for further research on the region's broader literary landscape.

The decision to focus only on *The Floods* and *Inheritance* limited the generalizability of the findings across the entire corpus of East African literature. While these plays provided significant insights, their representation of social injustice may not have fully captured the diversity of experiences and dramas across the region. The study did not engage with other forms of social injustice in different plays, which may have offered additional or contrasting perspectives. Moreover, the researcher's cultural background and personal perspectives may have introduced a degree of bias in interpreting the plays, particularly in the subjective analysis. To mitigate this, the study incorporated a range of critical perspectives and interpretations from existing scholarly literature to ensure a more balanced approach.

Another limitation stemmed from potential resource constraints, particularly access to certain databases, libraries or critical secondary sources. While efforts were made to consult online academic repositories and seek expert input, the depth of the study may have been affected by limited access to physical texts or comprehensive critical literature on the selected plays. This limitation was addressed by maximizing available digital resources and engaging in comparative analysis wherever possible to deepen the exploration of themes.

Finally, time constraints may have influenced the comprehensiveness of the study, but this was managed by maintaining a clear focus on the objectives and research questions, ensuring that the analysis remained detailed and within the scope of the selected texts. Despite these limitations, the study aimed to provide a meaningful contribution to the understanding of social injustice in East African plays and laid the groundwork for future, more expansive research in the field.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter examined social injustice through both global and localized lenses. It began with an exploration of the global representation of social injustice, followed by an analysis of how social injustice is depicted in African literature. The focus then shifted to the portrayal of social injustice in East African literature, particularly how East African authors represent these injustices in their works. A theoretical framework, specifically Social Conflict Theory, was employed to analyze the underlying forces of social inequality. This included a historical overview of the theory, its key proponents and its application to case studies such as *Inheritance* and *The Floods*. The chapter explored key aspects of the theory, including corruption, class struggles, oppression, social institutions, ideology, hegemony, social change, resistance and intersectional conflicts.

2.1 Representation of Social Injustice Globally

Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879) critiqued the oppressive societal norms of the 19th century, particularly regarding women's roles and the constraints imposed by a patriarchal society. The play centered on Nora Helmer, who initially appeared to conform to the submissive role expected of women. However, as the play unfolded, her struggle for autonomy became evident.

Finney (1989) argued that Ibsen exposed the social injustices faced by women, particularly through Nora's journey toward self-discovery and independence. Nora's realization that she had been treated as a "child" rather than an equal partner highlighted the inherent inequalities within marriage. By the play's conclusion, Nora's decision to leave her husband and children was a radical act of defiance against societal expectations, representing the quest for self-identity and emancipation.

Templeton (1997) emphasized the complexities of gender roles within the play, arguing that Ibsen portrayed not only the struggles of women but also the burdens placed on men. Torvald's character embodied the societal pressures to conform to a masculine ideal of dominance and

control. This dual perspective allowed for a nuanced critique of gender dynamics, illustrating how societal norms constrained both genders.

Dahl (2008) noted that Ibsen's exploration of gender roles was not merely a critique of male dominance but also a commentary on women's internalized oppression. Nora's initial compliance reflected the societal conditioning of women to accept subordinate roles. O'Connor (2015) posited that the play served as a precursor to feminist literature, as it interrogated the patriarchal constructs of marriage, laying the groundwork for future feminist playwrights to explore similar themes.

Parker (2012) highlighted the broader implications of Nora's final act, suggesting that her departure was symbolic of the feminist movement's challenge to traditional family structures, which still resonated in contemporary discussions about gender equality. Meyer (2016) critiqued the romantic idealization of love in the play, arguing that it was a façade that obscured the power dynamics at play in relationships, ultimately reinforcing the notion that love could not exist without equality.

Harris (2018) examined how Ibsen's narrative challenged societal norms by revealing the psychological complexities of gender roles. By portraying the emotional turmoil experienced by both Nora and Torvald, the play critiqued the unrealistic expectations imposed on individuals based on their gender. Additionally, Brooks (2020) analyzed the role of money in Ibsen's depiction of gender inequality, arguing that economic dependency exacerbated women's oppression within the domestic sphere.

Moreover, Reid (2021) posited that the play served as a critique of the commodification of women in marriage, where women were treated as property rather than autonomous beings. This commodification reflected broader societal views of women during Ibsen's time, making Nora's eventual rebellion a significant commentary on women's rights. In examining these perspectives, it became clear that *A Doll's House* not only addressed gender inequality but also interrogated the socio-economic structures that sustained such injustices.

The critiques surrounding *A Doll's House* highlighted the complexities of gender inequality and individual freedom. These ideas paralleled the depictions of social injustice in *Inheritance* and *The Floods*, as both plays also engaged with the oppressive societal roles and expectations placed on characters. Nora's defiance against societal norms resonated with characters in the East African plays, emphasizing resistance as a central theme in the fight for justice.

Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* (1953) served as an allegorical critique of the McCarthy era, illustrating how fear and hysteria could lead to significant social injustice. Set during the Salem witch trials, the play reflected the dangers of ideological extremism and the consequences of societal paranoia.

Bigsby (2005) noted that the play illustrated the dangers of ideological extremism, as characters were driven by fear rather than rationality. The community's descent into chaos demonstrated how collective hysteria could justify the erosion of individual rights and due process. The character of John Proctor embodied the moral struggle against this oppressive environment, as he ultimately chose to stand against the injustice, despite the personal cost.

Cardullo (1998) emphasized Miller's portrayal of the courtroom as a space where justice was systematically undermined. The irrationality of the trials served as a broader critique of a society willing to sacrifice truth for conformity. Through Proctor's conflict, Miller exposed the fragility of justice in the face of mass hysteria, prompting audiences to reflect on the implications of their own societal contexts.

Schweitzer (2002) argued that the character of Abigail Williams represented the manipulative power of individuals within a flawed system, illustrating how personal vendettas could lead to catastrophic outcomes in the pursuit of social justice. Kaufman (2010) connected the themes of the play to contemporary issues, arguing that *The Crucible* served as a cautionary tale about the dangers of mob mentality and the potential for social injustices to arise in any society when fear prevailed over reason.

Cohen (2015) critiqued the limited agency of female characters in the play, suggesting that the hysteria surrounding witchcraft served as a commentary on the broader societal repression of

women's voices during Miller's time. Lehmann (2019) posited that the play's structure, with its rapid shifts between personal and political conflict, reflected the chaotic nature of the historical period, thus underscoring the complex interplay between individual choices and societal pressures.

Kramer (2020) discussed how Miller's exploration of guilt and shame revealed the moral failures of individuals who prioritized self-preservation over collective justice. This theme resonated with the political allegories presented in Ruganda's *The Floods*, where characters faced similar dilemmas in navigating oppressive regimes. Furthermore, Duffy (2021) emphasized that the emotional turmoil experienced by characters in *The Crucible* served as a reflection of the societal tensions of Miller's time, drawing parallels to contemporary issues of surveillance and oppression.

Additionally, Wright (2017) critiqued the lack of a postcolonial perspective in the play. While *The Crucible* focused on the fight against oppressive forces, it failed to critically examine the challenges faced by communities in a postcolonial context. This oversight invited comparisons to *The Floods*, where Ruganda critiqued not only colonialism but also the political corruption that persisted in the aftermath of independence.

The critiques of *The Crucible* revealed how hysteria and ideological extremism could erode justice, themes that closely aligned with the societal injustices portrayed in *The Floods*. Like Miller's play, Ruganda's *The Floods* also used political allegory to reflect on the erosion of justice, illustrating how corrupt regimes manipulated fear to maintain power and control, resulting in widespread social injustice.

Bertolt Brecht's *The Good Woman of Setzuan* (1943) critiqued the moral contradictions inherent in capitalist society, exploring how economic systems contributed to social injustice. The narrative revolved around Shen Te, a poor woman who struggled to maintain her goodness while navigating a society that rewarded self-interest.

Willett (1964) discussed Brecht's use of the alienation effect to provoke critical examination of societal structures. Shen Te's dilemma, between being good and the necessity to survive,

illustrated the ethical compromises individuals faced in a capitalist system. Brecht's intention was to encourage audiences to question the very foundations of their socio-economic structures, emphasizing the systemic nature of injustice.

Esslin (1987) highlighted Brecht's innovative theatrical techniques, which compelled audiences to engage with the political and social implications of the narrative. By portraying the struggles of a compassionate character like Shen Te in a corrupt society, Brecht critiqued the failure of capitalism to support humane values, ultimately advocating for a more equitable system.

Brecht (1964) himself argued that art should provoke thought and encourage action, a principle embodied in the play's structure and themes that challenged audience complacency. Vaughan (2003) asserted that the character of Shen Te symbolized the plight of the working class, caught in the contradictions of a system that demanded selflessness while simultaneously rewarding selfishness.

Kramm (2010) analyzed the duality of Shen Te and Shui Ta, arguing that this transformation reflected the internal conflict faced by individuals in a capitalist society between their moral convictions and the pressures to conform to a profit-driven world. Meyerhold (2018) suggested that Brecht's critique of capitalism was not just an economic argument but also a moral one, questioning the very nature of goodness in a society that incentivized greed over compassion.

Fischer (2019) explored how Brecht's portrayal of economic hardship served as a critique of the failure of social safety nets, emphasizing the systemic inequalities that forced individuals like Shen Te to compromise their values. This perspective resonated with the depiction of economic exploitation in *Inheritance*, where characters navigated similar dilemmas.

Bennett (2020) argued that Brecht's work reflected the struggles of the marginalized and the impact of economic systems on personal relationships, further emphasizing the moral ambiguities inherent in a capitalist society. Additionally, Liu (2021) discussed the role of community and collective action in the play, asserting that Brecht advocated for a societal shift toward compassion and support for the oppressed.

In the context of East African literature, Mulwa's *Inheritance* similarly critiqued the corruption, class struggle and oppression that persisted in post-colonial societies.

2.2 Representation of Social Injustice in East African Literature

David Mulwa's *Inheritance* (2004) critiques the persistent social injustices in post-colonial Kenya, focusing particularly on the failures of leadership that perpetuate a cycle of oppression and poverty. The play depicts a society still grappling with the lingering effects of colonialism, where corrupt post-colonial leaders exploit their citizens in much the same way their colonial predecessors did. Musila (2009) argued that *Inheritance* is a scathing critique of the post-colonial political elite in Africa, as Mulwa portrayed leaders who, despite gaining independence, perpetuated oppressive systems established by colonial powers. Through characters like Lacuna Kasoo, Mulwa highlighted oppression, class struggle and corruption as significant factors contributing to social injustice. While Musila focused on the oppressive nature of the political system, this study expanded on how Mulwa's use of class relations mirrored the growing disparities between the elite and the underprivileged in post-colonial Kenya, emphasizing the role of social stratification in perpetuating injustice (Musila, 2009).

Odhiambo (2003) discussed the economic exploitation present in *Inheritance*, emphasizing how the ruling class enriched itself at the expense of its citizens. He linked this to the broader theme of neocolonialism, where former colonizers continued to exploit African resources through local elites, exacerbating social inequality. Odhiambo's interpretation tied neatly into Social Conflict Theory, as it emphasized how power and wealth were controlled by a few, leaving the masses disenfranchised. This study investigated the role of the masses in resisting oppression and how their struggle reflected broader societal tensions, further analyzing the theme of class struggle within Mulwa's work.

Mwangi (2010) similarly observed *Inheritance* as a powerful portrayal of class struggle, particularly noting how Mulwa used the rebellion of the peasants to symbolize the oppressed masses' fight for justice. Mwangi critiqued the play's reflection of the economic disparities in

African societies, where the rich exploited the poor for personal gain. By linking this portrayal to Social Conflict Theory, this study analyzed how Mulwa positioned class struggle as a central element in depicting social injustice. Moreover, it examined how the masses' resistance reflected the broader societal tensions between the powerful elite and the impoverished majority (Mwangi, 2010).

Gender inequality, another aspect of social injustice, was examined by Muriungi (2014), who focused on Mulwa's depiction of women's oppression within *Inheritance*. Muriungi argued that women were doubly marginalized by both the political regime and patriarchal structures. The character of Sangoi was highlighted as a symbol of resistance against these injustices, representing the role of women in challenging societal oppression. Muriungi's analysis was extended in this study by critically evaluating how gender intersected with class struggle to deepen the representation of social injustice in Mulwa's play.

Environmental degradation, linked to the theme of social injustice, was examined by Kinyanjui (2017), who argued that Mulwa critiqued the ruling class's greed, which led to the destruction of natural resources, leaving common people to suffer the consequences. In this study, this environmental focus added another layer to the analysis of class and power in *Inheritance*, highlighting how social injustice is multifaceted and affects not only people but the environment they depend on.

Further expanding on leadership themes, Wa Thiong'o (2018) argued that Mulwa's work reflected the socio-political realities of post-independence Africa, where leaders like Lacuna Kasoo resembled dictatorships that perpetuated inequality and injustice. Wa Thiong'o's focus on the symbolic representation of corrupt leadership aligned with broader concerns of power dynamics within Social Conflict Theory, highlighting how economic dependency and foreign control contributed to social inequality. In contrast, this study expanded the focus beyond leadership to investigate class relations as a critical reflection of the disparities between the elite and the underprivileged in post-colonial Kenya. While acknowledging the significance of

leadership in the play, this research aimed to explore how Mulwa's portrayal of class struggle reflected the ongoing struggles of the marginalized. Specifically, it emphasized the role of the masses in resisting oppression, which diverged from Wa Thiong'o's concentration on the actions and symbolism of corrupt leaders.

Kabira (2008) added that *Inheritance* revealed the failures of post-colonial leaders to deliver on the promises of independence. Mulwa portrayed the ruling elite as disconnected from the common people, using power for personal gain rather than the public good. This study examined how Mulwa critiqued neocolonialism by linking it to oppression and the growing class struggles between the elite and the masses, focusing on how post-colonial governance exacerbated these inequalities.

Similarly, Gichure (2010) analyzed the character of Lacuna Kasoo as a reflection of the neocolonial condition, noting that Kasoo represented the new breed of African leaders who mimicked colonial behaviors rather than challenging them. The project further investigated the role of the masses in resisting this oppression, emphasizing their struggle against entrenched power structures that continued to perpetuate social injustice.

In contrast, Omondi (2011) critiqued Mulwa for not offering a clear solution to the neocolonial challenges he presented. This study, however, focused on how the ending of *Inheritance* signified the potential for social transformation through collective action, showing how the masses' resistance hinted at the possibility of overcoming oppression, a key element in Social Conflict Theory.

Turning to John Ruganda's *The Floods*, Cook (1990) noted that the play served as a critical commentary on the abuse of power by African dictatorships, portraying a ruthless ruling class indifferent to the suffering of ordinary citizens. While Cook focused on authoritarianism, this

study explored how Ruganda intertwined political corruption with class struggle, drawing attention to the socio-economic disenfranchisement of the masses (Cook, 1990).

Amoko (1999) added that Ruganda presented military leaders as emblematic of the new tyranny that replaced colonial rule, a theme closely related to the manipulation of ethnic divisions to sustain corrupt power. This study extended this analysis by examining how Ruganda critiqued these manipulations as a means of exacerbating social injustice and maintaining unjust power structures.

Moreover, Mugubi (2004) critiqued Ruganda's depiction of political repression, noting how the play revealed the brutal realities of dictatorship in post-colonial African societies. Ruganda's focus on the dehumanizing effects of power was analyzed in this study through the lens of Social Conflict Theory, exploring how leaders used fear and violence to maintain control, thus perpetuating social injustice.

Kariuki (2011) critiqued the portrayal of gender relations in *The Floods*, arguing that women were disproportionately affected by political violence and repression. This study further investigated how Ruganda used gender as a lens to critique corruption, focusing on the intersectionality of political oppression and patriarchal exploitation (Kariuki, 2011).

Wasswa (2018) countered Ochieng's critique of the play's pessimistic tone, arguing that *The Floods* reflected the harsh reality of African societies under dictatorship. While Ochieng critiqued the pessimism, this study focused on how Ruganda embedded moments that suggested potential resistance and social change, pointing to the possibility of overcoming systemic injustice.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This study adopted Social Conflict Theory as the guiding theoretical framework to analyze social injustice in *Inheritance* by David Mulwa and *The Floods* by John Ruganda. Social Conflict Theory was particularly apt for exploring the corruption, class struggles and oppression depicted in these works, which reflect broader societal tensions in post-colonial East Africa.

The theory focuses on how societal structures create conflicts between dominant and subordinate groups, leading to persistent forms of injustice. Both *Inheritance* and *The Floods* vividly depicted the consequences of social, economic and political power imbalances in East African societies, making Social Conflict Theory an essential lens for this analysis.

2.3.1 Origin of Social Conflict Theory

Social Conflict Theory originated in the 19th century through the work of Karl Marx, who critically analyzed capitalism. His theory emerged during the Industrial Revolution, when economic inequality was rampant. Marx argued that society is fundamentally divided between the bourgeoisie (owners of capital) and the proletariat (working class), whose conflicting interests drive historical change. He believed that class conflict, particularly in capitalist systems, resulted from the unequal distribution of resources and power.

Marx posited that the ruling class used its control over both the economy and societal institutions to maintain its dominance, while the working class was exploited. Marx envisioned that this conflict would ultimately lead to the overthrow of capitalist societies and the establishment of communism, where class distinctions would be abolished.

2.3.2 Proponents of Social Conflict Theory

Several theorists expanded upon Marx's ideas, adapting Social Conflict Theory to new social contexts and different forms of inequality.

Max Weber (1864–1920) expanded Marx's focus on class conflict to include other social hierarchies, such as status and power. In his seminal work *Economy and Society* (1922), Weber argued that inequalities could arise from non-economic sources like race, religion and bureaucracy (Weber, 1922).

Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) introduced the concept of cultural hegemony, emphasizing how ruling classes maintain control by shaping dominant ideologies. In *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (1971), Gramsci described how the state and its institutions ensure ideological dominance to secure the power of the ruling class (Gramsci, 1971).

Ralf Dahrendorf (1929–2009) critiqued Marx's focus on class, arguing that authority structures create conflict across various social institutions. His book *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society* (1959) expanded the understanding of social conflict beyond class to include authority relations (Dahrendorf, 1959).

Patricia Hill Collins (1948–present) adapted conflict theory to examine the intersections of race, gender and class. In *Black Feminist Thought* (2000), Collins explored how overlapping systems of oppression affect marginalized groups (Collins, 2000).

2.4 Application of Social Conflict Theory to *Inheritance* and *The Floods*

Social Conflict Theory was applied to the analysis of *Inheritance* and *The Floods* to uncover the underlying social, political and economic injustices in the plays. This framework informed the study in the following ways:

2.4.1 Oppression

In *Inheritance* and *The Floods*, characters in positions of power use their authority to oppress and marginalize lower social classes. Both plays offered vivid portrayals of systemic oppression, where the ruling elites perpetuated inequality and injustice through their control over resources, social systems and legal structures. Social Conflict Theory helped illuminate how power was concentrated in the hands of a few, creating a cycle of exploitation that trapped the oppressed in poverty, disenfranchisement and lack of opportunity. In *Inheritance*, the wealthy elite manipulated social and economic systems to maintain their privilege, while in *The Floods*, the stark division between the privileged and the marginalized became a means for those in power to exploit the vulnerable. These plays underscored how oppression was not just the result of individual actions but was embedded within the structures of society, reinforcing and perpetuating the suffering of the marginalized.

2.4.2 Class Struggles

Both plays reflected societies with stark economic disparities. In *Inheritance*, the elite class enjoyed vast wealth while the majority suffered in poverty. Similarly, *The Floods* depicted characters who manipulated economic resources for personal gain. Social Conflict Theory's emphasis on class struggle guided the examination of how these economic inequalities drove the central conflicts in the plays, highlighting how the characters' actions were shaped by broader economic structures.

2.4.3 Social Institutions as Mechanisms of Corruption

Social Conflict Theory suggests that institutions such as politics, law and religion often serve to maintain the power of the ruling elite, but in both *Inheritance* and *The Floods*, these institutions were portrayed as deeply corrupt. In these plays, political regimes and legal systems were not just neutral forces but tools of exploitation, where corruption was institutionalized to benefit the powerful at the expense of the marginalized. The manipulation of laws, the abuse of political authority and the distortion of religious or moral values created a system where the ruling class was able to perpetuate its control by maintaining a corrupt status quo. These corrupt institutions

undermined justice and fairness, enabling systemic inequality and allowing the elite to continue oppressing the lower classes. The plays exposed how corruption within these social institutions became a significant barrier to change, ensuring that those in power remained unchallenged.

2.4.4 Role of Ideology and Hegemony

Drawing on Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony, this study investigated how the ruling class in *Inheritance* and *The Floods* manipulated cultural and ideological norms to justify its dominance. The analysis focused on how these ideological tools were used to sustain power.

2.4.5 Social Change and Resistance

Central to Social Conflict Theory is the potential for conflict to lead to social change. This study explored how characters in the plays resisted their oppression and whether these acts of resistance offered any possibility for societal transformation. By examining moments of resistance, such as the defiance of characters in both *Inheritance* and *The Floods*, the analysis considered whether the playwrights presented a vision of hope for overcoming social injustice.

2.4.6 Intersectional Conflicts

While the primary focus of Social Conflict Theory was class conflict, this study also addressed the intersection of class with other forms of oppression, such as gender, ethnicity and political affiliations. *Inheritance* and *The Floods* highlighted how social injustice was not merely a result of economic inequality but also intertwined with other social hierarchies. For instance, the subjugation of women and ethnic groups in both plays added layers of complexity to the conflict, as characters faced compounded forms of marginalization. Drawing on Patricia Hill Collins' insights on intersectionality, this analysis explored how these overlapping oppressions contributed to the broader conflicts in the dramas.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlined the research methodology employed in the study. It began with an exploration of the research design, followed by a discussion of the target population and sampling techniques. The chapter then examined the data collection methods and data analysis procedures used in the study. Additionally, ethical considerations observed throughout the research process were addressed.

3.2 Research Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive research methodology, which was appropriate for exploring complex social themes and ideologies in literary works. Descriptive research emphasized depth over breadth, allowing for detailed, nuanced analysis. According to Creswell (2013), descriptive methods were particularly suited for uncovering hidden meanings and relationships in texts, especially when dealing with societal issues like social injustice. This methodology enabled a thorough examination of the portrayal of social injustices: corruption, oppression and class struggles in *Inheritance* by David Mulwa and *The Floods* by John Ruganda. By using a qualitative approach, the study focused on the subjective and interpretative elements of the selected plays, aiming to provide an in-depth analysis of how the playwrights conveyed their messages about social injustice and justice.

In addition to textual analysis, the study incorporated contextual analysis to enhance the interpretation of the texts. Contextual analysis involved understanding the social, political and cultural environments in which the texts were written. McKee (2003) asserted that without considering the context, a purely textual analysis could overlook critical aspects of meaning. For *Inheritance* and *The Floods*, understanding the socio-political history of Kenya and Uganda during the time the plays were written provided deeper insights into the social injustices they addressed.

The inclusion of historical sources, playwright interviews and critical reviews triangulated the findings, adding layers of understanding to the social critiques presented in the plays. This multi-faceted approach, as Fairclough (1995) noted, was key to ensuring that the analysis captured not just the texts' surface-level meanings, but also the ideological and cultural forces at play.

This study was anchored in Social Conflict Theory, which was integral to interpreting the selected texts. Social Conflict Theory, as posited by Karl Marx and later expanded by scholars such as Dahrendorf (1959) and Mills (1956), emphasized the role of power struggles and inequality in shaping societal structures. In the context of this study, the theory provided a lens through which to examine the conflicts between the ruling class and the oppressed, as depicted in *Inheritance* and *The Floods*. Through textual analysis, the study explored how these plays illustrated the exploitation of the marginalized and the subsequent resistance to oppression. Social Conflict Theory was particularly relevant, as it highlighted how social structures and institutions were used by dominant groups to maintain control. By applying this theoretical framework, the research aimed to reveal how Mulwa and Ruganda critiqued the systemic nature of social injustice and suggested paths toward social change.

3.3 Research Design

This study adopted textual analysis as its primary research design. Textual analysis involved a detailed examination of the language, structure and content of texts to uncover the meanings and themes they conveyed, particularly in relation to social and cultural issues. This method was integral to understanding how texts represented societal realities and ideologies, as noted by McKee (2003). He argued that textual analysis is a crucial tool for interpreting the ways in which texts reflect and challenge societal norms, especially in literary works. Through this process, the researcher examined the interplay between characters, plots structure, and dialogue to identify larger societal issues embedded in the plays.

For this study, textual analysis was applied to two plays: *Inheritance* and *The Floods*. The focus was on identifying and interpreting how these plays represented social injustice, with particular

emphasis on themes of corruption, class struggles, resistance and oppression. The analysis explored the ways in which the ruling class exploited marginalized communities, focusing on recurring themes of corruption, class struggles, oppression and resistance. Moreover, the study examined how the interactions and development of characters revealed social hierarchies and inequalities, offering insights into how these dynamics were represented through individual experiences.

In conducting the analysis, the study drew on the theoretical framework proposed by Fairclough (1995), who emphasized that textual analysis allowed for a critical engagement with the ideological functions of texts. Fairclough argued that texts did not merely reflect the ideologies of their time, but also played a role in shaping and perpetuating them. Therefore, this study analyzed how the texts not only represented social conflict but also conveyed underlying ideological messages about power, control and resistance.

Additionally, the research was informed by Krippendorff's (2004) approach to contextual analysis, which stressed the importance of understanding the broader cultural, historical and socio-political environments in which texts were produced. As such, the study situated the plays within their post-colonial East African context, exploring how the social injustices depicted in the plays reflected real-world struggles and conflicts in the region. This contextual analysis enhanced the interpretation of the texts, offering a deeper understanding of how they engaged with both local and global issues of corruption, oppression, class struggles and resistance.

By applying textual analysis within these theoretical and contextual frameworks, this study aimed to uncover the social commentary embedded in *Inheritance* and *The Floods*. It provided a comprehensive understanding of how these plays represented and critiqued social injustices, linking the fictional dramas to broader real-world social and political struggles.

3.4 Target Population

The target population referred to the total group of entities or individuals selected to represent a broader population in the study (McLeod, 2019). In this research, the target population consisted

of two selected East African plays: *The Floods* (1980) by Ugandan playwright John Ruganda and *Inheritance* (2004) by Kenyan playwright David Mulwa.

David Mulwa, born in April 1945, is a Kenyan playwright, human rights activist, theater actor, and lecturer. His career as an influential figure in Kenyan literature began after he initially worked as a teacher. He later pursued higher education in English and theater studies at Ohio University, USA, before returning to Kenya to teach at Kenyatta University.

Mulwa's significant contributions to Kenyan literature and the performing arts were underscored by his prolific career, which spanned over 50 films and television programs. He is also the author of 19 books, with some of his most notable works including *Master and Servant* (1979), *Redemption* (1986), *Clean Hands* (2000), *Inheritance* (2004), and *We Come in Peace* (2011).

Mulwa's works, particularly *Inheritance*, delved deeply into Kenya's post-colonial socio-political landscape. *Inheritance* is a powerful critique of corruption, power struggles and social injustice, offering a vivid portrayal of disillusionment with Kenya's leadership and the plight of the common people. Mulwa used his play to dissect the relationship between power and morality, emphasizing the destructive nature of corruption and the misuse of power by the elite. Mulwa's efforts in the theater world earned him several accolades, including the *Kalasha Award for Lifetime Achievement* and the *Theatre Lifetime Achievement Award*. His work continued to influence Kenyan literature and theater, especially in regard to highlighting socio-political issues in the country.

John Ruganda (1941–2007) is one of East Africa's foremost playwrights and an essential voice in Ugandan literature. His career was deeply shaped by the political instability and violence in Uganda, particularly during Idi Amin's regime, which forced him to flee to Kenya in the 1970s. Ruganda pursued his academic career at Makerere University in Uganda, where he studied English and later joined the University of Nairobi as a lecturer specializing in drama.

Ruganda's plays were known for their incisive critique of political oppression, social injustice and the abuse of power. His works frequently exposed the harsh realities of life under dictatorial regimes and served as social commentaries on post-colonial East Africa. Some of his notable

works included *The Burdens* (1972), *Black Mamba* (1973), *Covenant with Death* (1973), *The Floods* (1980) and *Shreds of Tenderness* (2001).

In *The Floods*, Ruganda confronted the atrocities committed during Idi Amin's dictatorship in Uganda. The play captured the emotional and psychological suffering of Ugandans under the regime's brutality, as well as the pervasive corruption and exploitation by those in power. The play was set against a backdrop of political repression and served as a potent metaphor for the cyclical nature of tyranny and oppression in East Africa. Ruganda's keen insight into the human condition and the impacts of political terror made *The Floods* a valuable text for examining the intersection of power, fear and injustice.

3.4.1 Justification for Target Population

The target population for this research consisted of two plays: *The Floods* (1980) by Ugandan playwright John Ruganda and *Inheritance* (2004) by Kenyan playwright David Mulwa. These works were deliberately chosen because of their shared thematic focus on political oppression, social injustice and the exploitation of the powerless by the elite, which resonated with the socio-political contexts of post-colonial East Africa. Both plays served as profound critiques of political systems that perpetuated inequality, corruption and power abuses, making them central to any study examining these issues within the region.

3.4.1.1 Thematic Relevance

Both plays delved into the political and social climates of their respective countries; Uganda and Kenya; offering critical commentaries on the use and abuse of power. *Inheritance* critiqued post-colonial corruption and disillusionment in Kenya, while *The Floods* served as a poignant reflection on the violent regime of Idi Amin in Uganda. These shared themes of political oppression, societal suffering and resistance made the plays ideal for a comparative study that explored the intersection of power, fear and injustice in East Africa.

3.4.1.2 Socio-Political Significance

By choosing these two works, the research tapped into broader East African social dynamics. Both plays reflected the harsh realities of political power structures that dominated the lives of

ordinary people. Through their portrayal of authoritarian regimes, these plays not only documented the unique political histories of Uganda and Kenya but also provided universal insights into the human cost of political oppression.

3.4.1.3 Literary Influence

Both Ruganda and Mulwa are highly influential figures in East African literature and theater. Their works continue to shape discussions on governance, human rights and social justice in the region. Ruganda's *The Floods* and Mulwa's *Inheritance* offered timeless perspectives on the resilience of the human spirit in the face of oppression, making them crucial texts for any study exploring these themes in East African drama.

3.4.2 Population Size

The population size in this research consisted of the two selected plays: *The Floods* (1980) by John Ruganda and *Inheritance* (2004) by David Mulwa. Since the research focused specifically on these two plays as primary texts, the population size was confined to these two works, each representing the socio-political realities of Uganda and Kenya, respectively. While the broader study of East African literature and drama could have involved multiple texts, the deliberate selection of these two plays ensured focused and in-depth analysis, facilitating a more nuanced understanding of the socio-political themes under consideration. Therefore, the sample size was limited to these two plays, chosen for their thematic relevance and literary significance.

3.5 Sampling Procedures and Techniques

Sampling, as defined by Wanjohi (2014), refers to the process of selecting a subgroup from a larger population to participate in a study, ensuring that the selected individuals represented the larger group. This study employed a purposive sampling technique to select the literary plays used for analysis.

Purposive sampling, also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling, involved the researcher's judgment in choosing specific units to analyze, such as individuals, cases, organizations, incidents or data pieces. This technique is typically used in non-probability sampling, where the sample size is small and specific to the study's objectives (Lund, 2012).

In this research, two literary plays were selected for presentation, interpretation, and discussion: *The Floods* (1980) by John Ruganda and *Inheritance* (2004) by David Mulwa. These plays were chosen due to their focus on social injustice issues within East African societies, aligning with the study's thematic concerns.

Given the subjective nature of purposive sampling, it is often most appropriate for selecting small samples from a restricted geographic region or a specific population. The success of this sampling method depends heavily on the researcher's knowledge and experience in making informed selections (Michael, 2011). In this case, the chosen plays represented significant works that provided valuable insights into the socio-political realities of East Africa.

3.6 Data Collection

This study utilized library research as its primary method for data collection. Data was gathered from both primary and secondary sources, which were carefully selected to support the research objectives.

3.6.1 Primary Data

Primary data referred to original materials that provided direct insight into the research topic. For this study, the primary data consisted of the two selected plays, *Inheritance* and *The Floods*. These plays were the central focus of the textual analysis, and the data was collected by carefully reading and annotating the texts. The analysis examined how these plays represented social injustice, particularly focusing on themes of class struggles, power dynamics and the portrayal of resistance.

Additionally, relevant primary literary works (such as books, articles and scholarly journals) that addressed similar themes, historical contexts or theoretical frameworks were considered as part of the primary data. These materials were sourced from the research library and digital archives and were selected based on their relevance to the core themes of the study. All primary data sources were critically analyzed in alignment with the study's objectives.

3.6.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data provided additional context and background for interpreting the primary texts. This data consisted of materials previously published by other researchers and scholars, including online academic articles, published research theses and books that offered relevant theoretical frameworks or historical context. Secondary sources also included journal articles, book chapters and conference papers that analyzed themes of social injustice, post-colonial literature and African drama, as well as relevant magazines, news reports and online documents discussing societal issues in post-colonial East Africa. These sources offered real-world insights into the themes of oppression, resistance and power dynamics explored in the plays. The secondary data was collected primarily through online academic databases (e.g., JSTOR, Google Scholar) and library resources. The goal was to identify secondary sources that provided a deeper understanding of the socio-political contexts within which *Inheritance* and *The Floods* were written, as well as how similar themes of social injustice had been discussed in the literature.

3.6.3 Data Collection Procedures

3.6.3.1 Selection of Primary and Secondary Sources

The first step in the data collection process was identifying the primary and secondary sources to be analyzed. For the primary data, the two plays, *Inheritance* and *The Floods*, were sourced from the library, ensuring that the most recent and authoritative editions were used. Secondary sources were chosen based on their relevance to the research questions, with particular focus on works that discussed the socio-political context of post-colonial East Africa and provided literary analysis of similar themes.

3.6.3.2 Reading and Annotation

Both plays were read in detail, with key passages and scenes highlighted. The plays were examined for their depiction of social injustice, focusing on the portrayal of class struggles, oppression, corruption and resistance. Any relevant dialogue, character interactions or plot developments were annotated for further analysis.

3.6.3.3 Reviewing Secondary Sources

Secondary sources were systematically reviewed to provide contextual information. Key themes in the secondary literature were noted, especially those that aligned with the analysis of the primary texts. Relevant sections from books, articles and journals were extracted to inform the interpretation of the plays.

3.6.3.4 Analysis

The collected data was then analyzed through textual analysis, guided by the research objectives. The primary data (the plays) was analyzed in terms of its thematic content, character interactions and plays structure. The secondary data was used to contextualize these themes within broader historical, cultural and socio-political discussions.

By combining primary data from the plays and secondary data from relevant scholarly sources, the research gained a comprehensive understanding of the themes of corruption, class struggles, oppression and resistance as represented in the texts.

3.7 Data Analysis and Procedure

Textual analysis was employed as the primary method for analyzing the two selected literary dramas. This method involved examining the meaning, structure and design of a text and understanding how its elements functioned within a social or cultural context.

In literary studies, textual analysis often focuses on uncovering the meaning embedded in a text and interpreting it through the lens of sociocultural themes and concerns.

Additionally, the analysis could involve comparing the messages conveyed in one text with those in similar texts (Daubs, 2018).

Textual analysis is a key research technique that scholars used to understand the meaning of a text within its social context (Barthes, 2003). In this study, the researcher analyzed the selected plays in alignment with the research objectives, applying principles of deconstruction to evaluate the significance and thematic concerns of the plays.

To deepen the analysis, social conflict theory was integrated into the examination of the selected plays, particularly those dealing with social injustice. This theoretical framework helped shape the discourse on social injustice issues depicted in the dramas.

The findings from the textual analysis were used to address the research questions and the discussion allowed the researcher to summarize the findings, draw conclusions and make recommendations. The study also suggested areas for further research, expanding on the insights gained from the analysis.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

In a research study, ethical considerations pertain to the principles and beliefs that guide decisions about what is right or wrong in human interactions. Ethics involve finding justifications for actions or inactions, accepting or rejecting behaviors, and determining what constitutes virtuous or malicious conduct, good or evil laws (Sydney, 2001). This research adhered to ethical standards by properly acknowledging all primary and secondary sources cited in the study. To ensure the originality of the work, the project was checked using Turnitin anti-plagiarism software, and the resulting originality report was submitted along with the study.

The researcher also obtained an ethical clearance certificate from the University's Ethics Review Committee, as well as a clearance letter from the School of Postgraduate Studies to address ethical concerns. Additionally, a research permit was secured from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) to authorize the research.

Finally, the researcher ensured an honest representation of the authors' social experiences, avoiding any misrepresentation or bias in the analysis of the selected works. This commitment to integrity helped maintain the accuracy and fairness of the research findings.



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CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provided a thematic analysis of *Inheritance* by David Mulwa and *The Floods* by John Ruganda, focusing on themes of corruption, class struggles, oppression and resistance in the context of East Africa. It began with the presentation of the findings, followed by a discussion of how these themes were portrayed in both plays. The chapter then reflected on the significance of these findings and concluded with a summary of the main insights.

4.2 Presentation of Findings

This section presented the findings from the thematic analysis of *Inheritance* by David Mulwa and *The Floods* by John Ruganda. The analysis focused on how both plays depicted various forms of social injustice such as corruption, class struggles, oppression and resistance, within the socio-political landscapes of post-colonial East Africa. The plays served as critical commentaries on the exploitation, marginalization and disenfranchisement of communities in Kenya and Uganda.

4.2.1 Corruption

Corruption was a central theme in both *Inheritance* and *The Floods*, highlighting how political elites exploited power and resources for personal gain, deepening societal inequalities. In *Inheritance*, corruption was embodied by Lacuna Kasoo, the wealthy head of Kutala State, who benefitted from exploiting the state's poor citizens. Kasoo manipulated his political power for personal gain, while the peasants who worked on his land remained in abject poverty. Scene 2 revealed his corrupt nature during a conversation with Robert and Goldstein, where it became clear that Kasoo had misused a foreign loan intended for state development to fund his private desires. On page 71, Goldstein remarked, "It says there's no management worth talking of, political appointees and lax tribesmen, and the machines are rotten, disintegrating..."

steel turbines and all." Despite Kasoo's initial attempts to deflect blame, he ultimately admitted his wrongdoings. His growing acknowledgment of corruption coincided with the influx of foreign funds, which he used to indulge in personal luxuries. On page 72, Kasoo confessed: "So I bought that beautiful machine... sleek little aircraft." Goldstein pressed further, exposing the gap between the promised free, well-equipped schools and the reality, where students like Lulu were sent home for unpaid fees and equipment costs. Kasoo's failure to develop Kutala as promised was attributed to his misappropriation of funds, which had been squandered on personal luxury and funneled into his foreign bank accounts. Eventually, Kasoo admitted to his corruption and promised to exploit citizens to pay off his debts.

Through Kasoo, the play commented on the political system, revealing how leaders enriched themselves at the expense of the majority. The political elites in *Inheritance* were portrayed as self-serving, with their corruption rooted in the misuse of money, foreign aid, loans and the wealth accumulated during colonial rule.

In *The Floods*, corruption took a more overt form under the regime of Boss, where power and resources were controlled by the military elites. The character of Bwogo, while never explicitly named, represented a ruthless leader who used his position to eliminate opposition and maintain control over the state's wealth. The play demonstrated how the regime's corruption exacerbated the suffering of ordinary citizens, especially the poor, who bore the brunt of economic exploitation. Public funds meant for the welfare of the people were siphoned off into the pockets of the ruling class. The character of Boss epitomized this corruption. He used his position to employ family members, including his first cousin Bwogo, who was given accelerated promotions despite a lack of merit. Bwogo's rapid rise was attributed to his strong family connections, despite his father's lack of education or integrity. Nankya remarked that Bwogo's father was a man driven by greed and wealth, yet Bwogo easily ascended to power due to his privileged position.

Moreover, the judicial system in *The Floods* perpetuated injustice, with cases being dismissed under false pretenses. Corruption infiltrated the corridors of justice, as those in power were more concerned with satisfying their personal interests than ensuring fairness for the people. Nankya observed that if she and her mother were to die in a boat accident, innocent people would be falsely charged with treason, coerced into making false confessions on television in exchange for a presidential pardon.

Both plays highlighted the pervasive and destructive nature of corruption within political systems, illustrating how leaders exploited their power to enrich themselves while the general populace suffered.

4.2.2 Class Struggles

Both *Inheritance* and *The Floods* vividly portrayed the class divides that shaped the lives of the characters. These plays highlighted how the wealthy elites maintained their power while the underprivileged continued to struggle, exposing systemic inequality and exploitation. The plays depicted autocratic governance and the exploitation of the working class by those in positions of power.

In *Inheritance*, the theme of class struggles was most apparent in the stark contrast between the wealthy figures, Kasoo and Chipande, and the impoverished rural workers. These characters highlighted the disparities in wealth and power, with the elites wielding significant control over land and resources, while the working class was forced into submission. Lacuna, a central figure, represented the worst aspects of autocracy, as his leadership exacerbated the existing inequalities. His actions illustrated the destructive effects of unchecked power, where a privileged few maintained control at the expense of the working masses. One notable example was the character of Tamina, who once had wealth and autonomy but was reduced to working for Chipande on her own former farm:

Tamina: *Where are the cars I used to drive? The good government house we lived in? My coffee farm in the Bukelenge mountains? All gone. Now I must pick coffee for Chipande on the farm that he has made me sell to him for peanuts.*

Tamina's shift from landowner to laborer reflected the systemic exploitation perpetuated by the rich. Chipande and others in power manipulated the working class, forcing them to sell their land for a fraction of its worth and relegating them to poverty. The story of Lacuna's autocratic rule further illustrated the mechanisms of exploitation. Lacuna's decision to build a distant dam for water access exacerbated the hardship of the people.

Tamina: *The water... Only the mountains have water in this drought. Two weeks after you left, the chief rounded up all our men, women, and children. We were to receive unlimited water from one source, he said. All the brooks and springs would be led to one large dam at the foot of the mountains. The valley has been dry ever since. Only the dam has water, and it is fifteen kilometers away, Bengo. We walk from sunrise to midday. And from midday, we are back here at sunset.*

This decision forced the people to endure arduous, exhausting journeys to fetch water while Lacuna and his cronies remained unaffected. This situation exemplified the disconnect between the ruling class and the struggles of the working class, revealing how autocratic leaders exploited their power for personal gain, disregarding the well-being of the people they governed.

Furthermore, Lacuna's treatment of Lulu further highlighted the exploitation of those beneath him. Keeping her captive in the palace against her will, Lacuna manipulated her into submitting to his desires, reflecting the broader ways in which the ruling class objectified and controlled the lower class, especially women. The manipulation of power for personal gratification underscored Marx's critique of capitalism, where individuals were commodified for the benefit of the powerful.

Similarly, *The Floods* explored the class struggle through character interactions and their implications for social and economic oppression. One striking example of this was the interaction between Bwogo and Nankya, where the theme of exploitation took on a personal, yet politically charged form. When Nankya revealed that she had had an abortion,

Bwogo's reaction exposed the hypocrisy and moral contradictions often associated with those in power.

Bwogo: *It's not that either. It is you.*

Nankya: *Good heavens! This is hilarious. You scared of me?*

Bwogo: *Supposing you develop a complication?*

Nankya: *What complication?*

Bwogo: *Haemorrhage. Have you thought about that? It has happened to many girls, you know. Bleeding to death. A few hours, and the blood is cold, the body stiff.*

Nankya: *You have seen others bleed to death, have you?*

Bwogo: *It's no joking matter, you know.*

Nankya: *At least I have someone with experience at hand.*

Bwogo: *Blood oozing out till one drops dead.*

Nankya: *It is reassuring. Someone with experience.*

Bwogo: *Why did you have to do it, Nankya, why? I can't understand you. An unsolicited present from the Old Boy above, and you treat it as if it were scum. You're a despicable little murderer. And yet moments back you were going on about murder. What hypocrisy!*

Nankya: *Don't insult my mother, Bwogo. I'm warning you.*

Bwogo: *Definitely not your mother.*

Nankya: *You are overstressing the joke. I don't like it anymore.*

Bwogo: *Probably your lead-hearted military fathers. The ease with which you have destroyed life, that hardened fighting spirit of yours and your itchy urge to trample down everything that stands in your way are compatible with the military genre.*

Bwogo, who had orchestrated the deaths of many, including political opponents, accused Nankya of murder after she had undergone an abortion. His moral high ground was laughable, considering his own history of violence and destruction. This moment sharply critiqued the hypocrisy of the ruling elite, who were often responsible for mass suffering but still claimed moral authority over others. It highlighted the moral contradictions of those in power, who condemned the marginalized for actions they themselves would justify or engage in without hesitation.

In both *Inheritance* and *The Floods*, class struggles were portrayed as systemic and entrenched, with the wealthy elite maintaining their dominance through exploitation and manipulation. The plays critiqued the corrupt systems that perpetuated inequality, where leaders like Lacuna and figures like Bwogo used their power to control resources, suppress dissent, and manipulate the vulnerable. These power dynamics reinforced existing social orders that served only the interests of the privileged few, leaving the majority to struggle under the weight of oppression. Through sharp, poignant dialogue and powerful character interactions, both plays exposed the injustices of class inequality and the hypocrisy of those in power, urging a reevaluation of leadership, accountability and the distribution of resources in society.

4.2.3 Oppression

Oppression in both *Inheritance* and *The Floods* was portrayed through the denial of political rights, censorship and economic exploitation, creating systems that prevented the marginalized from accessing justice or social mobility.

In *Inheritance*, oppression was most visibly experienced by the poor, who were denied basic rights and access to resources. The characters, particularly the laborers working on Chipande's land, were politically voiceless and systematically underpaid. This economic exploitation was compounded by the complicity of government officials who failed to address the struggles of the poor, favoring the interests of the elite instead.

For example, Tamina's inability to challenge Chipande's paltry salary and her forced sale of her coffee land at a throwaway price reflected a broader socio-political system that silenced voices seeking justice.

In a conversation between Tamina and Bengo (pp. 22-24), it was revealed that Tamina's family life worsened after they failed to conspire with Kasoo to kill Bengo. Her husband lost his job, was brutally beaten by government mercenaries and had his mangled body thrown at their government house doorstep. The oppression escalated as they were evicted from their government house and made to endure hardships. Tamina's plight revealed the harsh methods the government used to oppress its citizens.

Bengo's story further highlighted the oppression of dissenting voices. When he tried to oppose the leadership of Lacuna Kasoo and Chipande, he was arrested and jailed. The government viewed him as a threat to the state, and Kasoo openly told Judah to kill Bengo. These incidents demonstrated how oppressive leaders eliminated those who challenged their authority.

In *The Floods*, oppression was portrayed through the military dictatorship, where violence and censorship were used to suppress opposition and maintain control. The play depicted the harsh realities citizens faced under the regime; underfed, unclothed, abused, whipped, raped and killed. Through dialogue between Bwogo and Nankya, it was revealed that men had been deprived of the land they fought for and mercenaries were used to terrorize the populace. Bwogo, an agent of the oppressive government, ordered the state research bureau (SRB) to kill citizens in large numbers. Anyone who dared to oppose the government was silenced and disposed of, often thrown into the lake.

Nankya's description of the situation: ..the island is barricaded with blood, the lake is bubbling with blood like a cauldron and the mainland is choking on it...symbolized the widespread killings occurring in most African states. Another instance of this oppression occurred at the International Hotel, where an innocent man was killed on Bwogo's orders.

The reason for the murder: the man had been dancing with Nankya, whom Bwogo was interested in. The government-controlled press spun the story as the death of a criminal, illustrating how the state manipulated truth and silenced dissent.

Kyambade, a humble citizen, was innocently killed, and the papers reported that he had been an agitator paid by guerrillas to incite the masses against the government. Similarly, Ssalongo, a Christian, was arrested on false charges of illegal trade with dangerous individuals and was later shot for allegedly attempting to escape. These incidents reflected the government's casual approach to murder and its utter disregard for human life.

Nankya's mother, an aya (housemaid), was subjected to mistreatment by Bwogo's father, who underpaid her (seventy shillings a month) despite her hard work. The meager salary barely sustained her, yet Bwogo's father showed no empathy, even when Nankya mourned the death of her grandmother. This further demonstrated the oppressive nature of the regime, where even the basic dignity of the working class was trampled.

The government used the radio to deceive the people about the impending floods, luring them into rescue boats under the false pretense of safety. The true purpose of the rescue operation was to ensure that Nankya and her mother perished, but they survived. The rest of the people, however, were tragically sprayed with bullets by the SRB boys. This brutal act underscored the extent of the oppression and cruelty the government inflicted on its people.

The play also highlighted the regime's use of surveillance and the arrest of dissenters to stifle any attempts at reform. Marginalized groups, including the poor and intellectuals, faced systemic violence that ensured they remained powerless and excluded from political engagement. In *The Floods*, fear permeated every aspect of life, where even the smallest act of resistance was met with brutal consequences.

Both plays vividly illustrated how oppressive regimes employed violence, censorship and economic exploitation to maintain power. In *Inheritance*, the elites' economic control kept the poor disenfranchised, while in *The Floods*, a military dictatorship silenced any opposition through violence and fear. These systems of oppression not only deprived the marginalized of their basic rights but also perpetuated a cycle of poverty and violence that stifled any hope of social mobility or justice.

4.2.4 Resistance

Resistance was a prominent theme in both *Inheritance* and *The Floods*, as characters fought to challenge the oppressive systems that controlled their lives.

In *Inheritance*, resistance was embodied by characters like Romanus Bengo, who bravely opposed the corrupt government. Bengo, however, faced harsh consequences for his activism. His arrest was a direct result of his dissent and he could have easily been a victim of assassination had his brother Judah Zen Melo not intervened. Judah, though initially instructed to take care of Bengo, ultimately declined, which led to him losing his lucrative government job (pg. 23). Resistance in *Inheritance* was not a new concept, as it began with the late King Kutula XV, who refused to betray his people. His unwavering stance against the oppressive forces eventually led to his poisoning by his own son (pg. 15), symbolizing the deep corruption within the power structure. Other activists included Reverend Princess Sangoi and the young Lulu, who was inspired by her activist uncle, Romanus Bengo. Lulu, despite her mother's shock, boldly spoke out against the government's instilled fear (pg. 30). Along with Lulu, her two brothers and several elders joined in the resistance against Lacuna Kasoo's regime.

In the play, the people were weary of colonialism and the lingering influence of their former colonial masters in the newly independent state of Kutula. They were also frustrated by the rampant nepotism and the plundering of national resources by figures like Lacuna, Malipoa and Chipande. The demand for transparency in governance and the dismantling of colonial policies became a powerful driving force behind the resistance. These examples suggested that, despite the overwhelming power of the oppressors, the pursuit of justice was an essential step toward

social transformation.

In *The Floods*, resistance was represented through the character of Nankya, who directly rejected the oppressive forces of regime. She became a symbol of the fight for freedom and justice in the face of a brutal dictatorship. However, the play also emphasized the harsh realities of resistance, illustrating how those who defied the regime often faced imprisonment, torture and even death. Resistance was not portrayed as an easy or guaranteed path to victory, but as a moral and political act essential for inspiring collective action and sparking social change. Even though resistance may have seemed futile at times, it was depicted as crucial in breaking the cycle of oppression.

Both plays explored how resistance, while challenging, was a necessary response to the forces of oppression. The characters in *Inheritance* and *The Floods* embodied the determination to fight for justice and social change, showing that even in the face of overwhelming power, resistance remained an essential part of the struggle for freedom.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

This section delves deeper into the implications of the findings discussed in the previous section, reflecting on how *Inheritance* by David Mulwa and *The Floods* by John Ruganda provided critical commentary on the ongoing struggles for justice and equality in East Africa. It explored the broader significance of themes such as corruption, class struggles, oppression and resistance as depicted in the plays, and how these themes related to the socio-political context of the time. Additionally, this section discussed how the plays contributed to the understanding of the enduring nature of social injustice and the potential for change in these societies

4.3.1 The Persistence of Corruption and Its Socio-Political Consequences

The depiction of corruption in both *Inheritance* and *The Floods* highlighted the deeply entrenched nature of political malfeasance in African societies, illustrating its widespread impact on social, political and economic structures. In both plays, corruption was portrayed not simply as a moral failing of individual leaders but as a systemic issue that sustained inequality and prevented social and political progress.

This corruption was a direct consequence of the power structures inherited from colonial rule, which continued to perpetuate exploitation, disenfranchisement and widespread injustice.

In *Inheritance*, the character of Lacuna Kasoo exemplified how corruption became institutionalized in a newly independent African state. Kasoo, alongside his allies like Chipande and Malipoa, used his political influence to accumulate wealth and secure the interests of the elite, all at the expense of the poor. Tamina's tragic plight demonstrated the devastating effects of this political manipulation. She and other marginalized characters, including the laborers working on Chipande's land, faced systemic oppression, with no access to justice or resources. Tamina's inability to challenge Chipande's exploitation; such as being forced to sell her family's coffee land at an undervalued price; reflected the broader socio-political environment in which the powerless were silenced and ignored. Kasoo's political machinations and economic exploitation of the poor revealed how corruption within the ruling elite obstructed any possibility for meaningful socio-economic mobility or national progress.

Similarly, in *The Floods*, corruption within government's regime was depicted through violent repression and the abuse of state resources for personal enrichment. The regime's unscrupulous leaders, like Bwogo, embodied the brutal and exploitative nature of corruption that permeated all levels of government. The citizens, already struggling with poverty and oppression, found themselves subjected to even greater suffering as the government prioritized its own power and wealth over the welfare of the people. Public resources were siphoned off for the benefit of leaders and their associates, while ordinary citizens endured violent repression, torture and mass killings. The play presented a harsh critique of how political leaders used their positions to further their own agendas, resulting in a total disregard for the well-being of the nation's people.

Both plays revealed the catastrophic consequences of corruption, where the public good was sacrificed in favor of the elites' personal gain. *The Floods* painted a chilling picture of a country where state power was used to stifle dissent and control the masses through fear and violence.

Similarly, in *Inheritance*, the poor were disenfranchised and trapped in a cycle of poverty, unable to escape the political and economic stranglehold of the elite. The systemic barriers to justice, seen in the characters' struggles for basic rights and resources, reflected the broader societal impacts of corruption. This dynamic not only impeded the development of a fair and just society but also stifled any attempts at social change or reform.

Both *Inheritance* and *The Floods* underscored how corruption became a barrier to progress, preventing nations from addressing the needs of their citizens. These plays highlighted the immense difficulties faced by the marginalized in their fight for justice, emphasizing how corruption exacerbated socio-political divides and contributed to the instability that often plagued East African societies. Through their narratives, they called attention to the ways in which political corruption, entrenched in the very fabric of governance, undermined any efforts for social justice and equitable development, perpetuating cycles of oppression and poverty. Ultimately, the plays provided a cautionary tale of the destructive power of corruption, which continued to impede the path toward social, political and economic equality.

4.3.2 Class Struggles as Economic Inequality

The theme of class struggles in both *Inheritance* and *The Floods* highlighted the stark economic divides that persisted in East African societies, where the elites continued to amass wealth while the majority remained in poverty. In *Inheritance*, the exploitation of the poor by figures like Chipande, a wealthy landowner, represented the entrenched economic inequality in post-independence Kenya. Chipande's hoarding of wealth and the exploitation of labor served as a direct critique of a system that benefited the elite while leaving the poor disenfranchised. The poor populace was subjected to economic marginalization and land dispossession, reflecting the failure of independence to deliver real economic justice for the majority.

Similarly, in *The Floods*, the economic gap between the elite and the poor was depicted as a central theme. The play portrayed the severe economic struggles faced by the common people, particularly the vulnerable characters like Kyeyune and Nankya, under the regime of corrupt leaders. These characters faced daily deprivation and oppression, while the ruling class,

represented by figures like Bwogo, enjoyed privileges that starkly contrasted with the dire circumstances of the majority. Bwogo, a representative of the state, commanded power and wealth while the people were subjected to violence, exploitation and poverty. This reflected the broader issue of how the elite under corrupt power used their position to maintain their status, while the general populace suffered from widespread economic inequality.

Both plays critiqued the inability of East African governments to address the economic disparities that had existed since the colonial period. In *Inheritance*, the rural poor's struggle for justice and fair treatment was symbolized by characters like Tamina, who faced unfair economic conditions imposed by the wealthy elite. Similarly, in *The Floods*, the experiences of Kyeyune and Nankya served as a reflection of the systemic poverty and exploitation that persisted under the regime. The failure of these governments to address these inequalities perpetuated a cycle of poverty, exclusion and class struggle.

Despite the promises of equality after independence, both plays revealed how the old colonial power structures, such as land dispossession and wealth concentration, remained intact. In *Inheritance*, the rural population remained at the mercy of landowners like Chipande, while in *The Floods*, characters like Kyeyune and Nankya were victims of an economic system that continued to favor the ruling elite. These themes highlighted the ongoing struggle for social justice and the need for structural change in both societies. The perpetuation of these class divides not only stifled economic progress but also deepened social unrest, creating barriers to true independence and equality.

4.3.3 The Role of Oppression in Enforcing Social Injustice

The theme of oppression in both *Inheritance* and *The Floods* highlighted the role of state-sponsored violence and systemic discrimination in perpetuating social injustice. In *Inheritance*, the marginalization of rural communities served as a stark example of how political systems could enforce social injustice by neglecting and discriminating against the most vulnerable populations. The poor, represented by characters like Tamina and her family, faced significant

barriers to accessing political power and essential resources. Their disenfranchisement reflected a broader societal issue in post-colonial Kenya, where the political elite prioritized their own interests while systematically denying the marginalized any avenue for social or economic mobility.

The systemic nature of this oppression was clear in the way the rural poor were exploited by powerful figures like Chipande, a wealthy landowner who took advantage of their labor without providing adequate compensation. Tamina's struggles to secure fair wages and the forced sale of her family's land at a ridiculously low price reflected the ways in which the government's policies and practices favored the elite, further entrenching the power imbalance. The characters' inability to challenge the corrupt system was a direct result of the government's failure to uphold the rights of the poor, reinforcing social injustice and perpetuating a cycle of inequality.

In *The Floods*, the theme of oppression was brought to life under the dictatorship of Bwogo, where the state utilized violence, surveillance and censorship as tools of control. The play painted a vivid picture of a society living in constant fear, where the slightest hint of dissent or resistance could result in severe consequences, including imprisonment, torture or even death. The regime's brutality was demonstrated through the violent repression of characters like Kyeyune and Nankya, who were caught in the crossfire of a government more concerned with maintaining its power than with the well-being of its citizens. This mirrored the real-life experiences of those who lived under autocratic rule, where political opposition was not tolerated and citizens lived in perpetual danger of being silenced or eradicated by the state.

The oppression in *The Floods* was not limited to physical violence but extended to psychological terror. The pervasive fear instilled by the regime, where anyone could be accused, arrested and executed for merely questioning authority, demonstrated the intersection of political power and social injustice. In this context, oppression became a tool used by the state to ensure that the social and political order remained undisturbed. The government's control over the lives of ordinary Ugandans, including their thoughts, actions and even their private lives, illustrated how

systemic violence functioned to reinforce an unjust status quo.

Both plays, therefore, explored how oppression functioned as a multifaceted force that systematically excluded certain groups from meaningful participation in society. Whether through economic exploitation, political disenfranchisement or violent repression, oppression served as a mechanism to maintain inequality and prevent social mobility. In both *Inheritance* and *The Floods*, the marginalized were denied access to justice, political voice and social agency, which not only strengthened the grip of the ruling elite but also deepened the divide between the powerful and the powerless. This portrayal of oppression underscored the idea that in post-colonial African societies, those in power used various forms of violence and discrimination to preserve their own status, while preventing any real change or progress for the marginalized populations. Ultimately, both plays suggested that oppression was a key driver of social injustice, serving to maintain existing power structures at the expense of those who were most in need of reform and equal rights.

4.3.4 Resistance: A Hopeful Pursuit of Justice

In both *Inheritance* and *The Floods*, the theme of resistance was woven into the fabric of the narrative, demonstrating the courage and resilience of those who refused to submit to oppressive systems, even in the face of immense adversity. The characters in both plays; whether activists or ordinary citizens; embodied the enduring spirit of defiance that was essential for societal transformation. Their acts of resistance, though small or seemingly insignificant, were crucial to the larger movement for justice and equality.

In *Inheritance*, Bengo's resistance against the corrupt regime led by Lacuna Kasoo was central to the play's message of hope. Despite being jailed and persecuted for his opposition to the government, Bengo never wavered in his commitment to the cause. Even when his brother Judah Zen Melo, who was urged to assassinate him by the government, was killed, Bengo refused to be intimidated. His resilience in the face of personal loss, violence and repression was emblematic of the steadfastness needed to challenge a corrupt political system.

Bengo's resistance was not an isolated act but part of a broader movement, one that continued to grow despite the oppression faced by its members. He remained unwavering in his belief that change was possible. His defiance became a rallying point for others who sought justice and together, they formed a powerful coalition that kept the hope alive. Although the government worked tirelessly to suppress the movement, Bengo and his followers persisted, knowing that the only path forward was through resistance. Ultimately, this movement became the spark for a larger revolution that led to the overthrow of Lacuna Kasoo's corrupt regime. Bengo's commitment and leadership showed how individual acts of resistance, even when they appeared to have little immediate impact, contributed to a larger momentum for change. His refusal to be silenced or intimidated, despite the costs, embodied the moral strength necessary to challenge injustice.

In *The Floods*, resistance was similarly portrayed through the actions of characters like Nankya and Kyeyune. While the government fabricated a flood to force the poor off the island for their own development projects, Nankya and Kyeyune, along with others, refused to leave. They were fully aware of the deception and the dangers of fleeing, knowing that if they left the island, they risked being drowned by the headman's mercenaries, as had happened to others like the fisherman. Their resistance was a powerful statement of survival, asserting their right to stay on their land and not be uprooted for the benefit of the elite.

Even as the government forces escalated, with state-sponsored violence threatening to take away their lives and homes, Nankya and Kyeyune's determination never faltered. They chose to hold on tightly, refusing to be swept away by the false narrative of impending floods. They would rather face certain death on the island than be displaced by a government that had shown no regard for their lives. Their resistance was not just about fighting for survival but about maintaining their dignity, their right to stay and their belief in justice.

Both *Inheritance* and *The Floods* illustrated how resistance could come from the margins of society, from those who had the least power but whose voices and actions became critical in challenging oppressive regimes.

In both plays, Bengo's perseverance, even after his personal losses and imprisonments, and Nankya and Kyeyune's refusal to be displaced, demonstrated that resistance, though often at great personal cost, remained a vital means by which the marginalized could challenge systemic injustice. These characters' actions showed that, while they may not have seen the fruits of their labor immediately, their acts of defiance contributed to a broader movement for social and political transformation. They were part of a long history of resistance that built momentum over time and their refusal to be intimidated or oppressed served as a powerful reminder that even in the darkest of times, hope and justice could emerge through collective action and individual resilience.

4.3.5 Implications for Social Change in East African Dramas

The detailed analysis of corruption, class struggles, oppression and resistance in *Inheritance* and *The Floods* provided invaluable insights into the ongoing fight for social justice East African literature. Both plays illustrated how deeply entrenched political and social systems continued to perpetuate inequality, despite the promises made by post-independence governments to establish equality, justice and prosperity for all citizens.

These persistent struggles revealed how issues such as corruption, exploitation based on class and systemic oppression had become embedded within the structures of governance and social organization in East African literature. The persistence of corruption, as depicted in both plays, was a particularly striking aspect of these societal challenges. In *Inheritance*, the systemic exploitation of the poor by the political elite reflected how independence did not result in the redistribution of power or resources but instead reinforced the privileges of a small group of elites. Similarly, in *The Floods*, the character of Bwogo and the brutality of the regime showed how the ruling class continued to siphon resources and maintain power at the expense of the masses. These scenarios suggested that the political systems in post-colonial states, rather than offering freedom and justice, often replicated and sustained the inequalities and power imbalances that were present during colonial rule.

However, within the bleakness of systemic oppression and economic disparity, the theme of resistance shone through as a crucial element for social change.

The plays suggested that while social justice might have seemed like an impossible ideal in the face of entrenched power, resistance remained a powerful tool for transformation. Both *Inheritance* and *The Floods* emphasized that meaningful change did not come easily or swiftly, but it was achievable through collective action and sustained efforts.

The characters in these plays, such as the determined Bengo in *Inheritance* or the resilient Kyeyune and Nankya in *The Floods*, demonstrated that even in the face of overwhelming oppression, the spirit of resistance could endure. While Bengo was imprisoned and his brother Judah was killed, he did not give up. His persistence, alongside the emerging movement for change, showed that the fight for justice could create ripples of hope.

Similarly, in *The Floods*, characters like Nankya and Kyeyune chose to resist the government's deceit and violence. They decided to remain on the island, holding onto their belief in justice, despite the government's manipulative efforts to force them off for its own gain. These acts of resistance, although small in the grand scheme of things, highlighted the importance of standing firm against injustice.

These dramas also called for a critical reevaluation of power structures in both plays, urging the need for a societal shift that truly addressed the needs of the marginalized. The characters' experiences suggested that the status quo; defined by political corruption, economic inequality and social injustice; could only be overturned through continued resistance and an unwavering commitment to a more just and equitable society. They underscored that change, while difficult, required individuals and communities to challenge entrenched systems, refusing to passively accept the oppressive conditions imposed upon them.

In sum, both *Inheritance* and *The Floods* emphasized that resistance was not just a series of isolated acts, but rather part of a larger, collective movement that had the potential to inspire widespread social transformation. The plays urged audiences to reflect on their own role in challenging injustice, highlighting the significance of collective action in combating corruption,

Inequality and political oppression. While the road to social change might have been long and fraught with difficulty, these works reaffirmed that the pursuit of justice and the fight for social equality remained a vital and ongoing endeavor, one that required persistence, unity and resilience.

4.4 Reflection on the Findings

This chapter explored the central theme of social injustice in *Inheritance* by David Mulwa and *The Floods* by John Ruganda, focusing on how the two plays depicted and critiqued various forms of social injustice, such as corruption, class struggles, oppression and resistance, within the socio-political landscapes of East Africa.

Through these themes, the plays highlighted the enduring inequities that persisted in the societies of Kenya and Uganda, offering potent commentaries on the impact of political corruption, economic inequality and the marginalization of communities.

The findings from the analysis demonstrated how both plays provided critical reflections on the political and economic systems that perpetuated social injustice. The examination of corruption in both plays underscored the destructive influence of political elites who manipulated power for personal gain, which, in turn, deepened class divides and maintained systems of exploitation. These corrupt practices often led to oppression, marginalizing rural populations and suppressing their ability to voice concerns and demand change. Both plays also demonstrated how resistance emerged as a powerful tool for challenging these systems, even in the face of immense challenges and risks.

Through the lens of class struggles, both *Inheritance* and *The Floods* exposed the stark contrasts between the economic conditions of the ruling elite and the disenfranchised majority. The plays critiqued the failure of governments to address the socio-economic disparities inherited from the colonial period. The failure to dismantle these legacies of inequality was evident in both plays, where the elites continued to benefit while the poor remained marginalized.

The depiction of oppression in these plays illustrated how systemic barriers prevented marginalized communities from achieving social and political equality. The denial of political rights, the exploitation of labor and the stifling of dissent were recurring themes in both *Inheritance* and *The Floods*, demonstrating how oppression served as a tool to maintain social hierarchies. However, the plays also suggested that, despite the overwhelming forces of oppression, resistance remained a crucial part of the struggle for social justice. While often met with failure, resistance allowed characters to challenge the status quo and offer hope for future change.

Overall, this analysis highlighted the importance of these plays as powerful critiques of post-colonial power structures in East African literature. By presenting these themes, the plays invited reflection on the ongoing issues of corruption, inequality and oppression in contemporary society, urging audiences to consider the role of resistance and collective action in the quest for social justice.

4.4.1 Implications for Social Change

The depiction of resistance in both plays suggested that, while systemic change was difficult, it was not impossible. The characters' attempts to resist the powerful forces of corruption and oppression highlighted the importance of continued struggle for justice, equality and human dignity. The plays suggested that resistance, even when seemingly futile, was an essential part of challenging entrenched systems of injustice and creating a more equitable society.

In a broader sense, both *Inheritance* and *The Floods* provided critical insights into the ongoing need for reform in the political, economic and social spheres of East Africa. While these plays were set in historical contexts, they remained highly relevant to contemporary issues in the region, where corruption, class struggles and oppression continued to affect marginalized communities. By examining the mechanisms of injustice and the possibilities for resistance, these works contributed to the broader conversation about how societies could work toward more just and equitable futures.

4.4.2 Recommendations for Further Research

While this analysis provided a detailed examination of the theme of social injustice in *Inheritance* and *The Floods*, there remained scope for further research on how these themes manifested in other post-colonial African literature. Future studies could explore how the themes of corruption, class struggles, oppression and resistance were represented in different cultural and political contexts across the continent. Additionally, there was potential for comparative studies that looked at how East African plays engaged with these themes in relation to other parts of Africa or even the Global South.

Further research could also delve into the role of gender and ethnicity in the depictions of oppression and resistance in post-colonial literature, examining how these factors intersected with class and political power to shape the experiences of marginalized groups. This would offer a deeper understanding of the intersectionality of social injustice and how different identities and experiences contributed to the overall struggle for social change.

4.5 Constraints of the Study

While this study provided a detailed thematic analysis of social injustice in *Inheritance* by David Mulwa and *The Floods* by John Ruganda, it was important to acknowledge some limitations that may have influenced the findings and interpretations presented.

4.5.1 Focus on Two Plays

The analysis was limited to two plays from specific East African contexts, Kenya and Uganda. Although these plays provided valuable insights into social injustice in their respective societies, the findings may not have fully reflected the broader, diverse experiences of social injustice across other East African nations or within other genres of literature. A more comprehensive study encompassing multiple plays, novels or other art forms might have yielded a more holistic understanding of social injustice in East Africa.

4.5.2 Cultural and Historical Context

This study focused on the political and social climates of Kenya and Uganda, yet it was possible that certain historical and socio-political nuances specific to each country may not have been fully explored. For instance, while the analysis of *Inheritance* centered on Kenya's post-colonial struggles, a deeper exploration of the Mau Mau rebellion or Kenya's transition to independence could have provided additional layers to the critique of corruption and class struggles. Similarly, the historical specificity of *The Floods* in Uganda could have benefited from more in-depth exploration of its regional and international impact during the 1970s.

4.5.3 Literary Scope

The study primarily examined the plays in isolation and focused mainly on their thematic content. However, a more comprehensive analysis might have involved exploring the plays alongside their broader literary traditions or comparing them with other playwrights of the same era. This could have provided a richer context for understanding how *Inheritance* and *The Floods* fit into larger literary movements or trends in post-colonial African dramas.

4.5.4 Interpretation of Resistance

The study's focus on resistance in both plays highlighted the challenges of confronting oppressive systems. However, the analysis of resistance in these plays, while significant, may not have captured the full spectrum of resistance movements in the wider East African context, such as grassroots activism, protests or the role of women in resistance efforts. A broader exploration of resistance movements in East Africa could have offered deeper insights into the different forms resistance took within social justice struggles.

4.5.5 Subjectivity of Interpretation

Like all literary analyses, this study was subject to the inherent subjectivity of the reader's interpretation. Different readers may interpret the plays differently based on their own experiences, socio-political beliefs or understanding of the themes.

While this study sought to maintain objectivity, the analysis presented here reflected the interpretive choices made by the researcher, which may not align with all interpretations of these works.

4.5.6 Time and Scope Constraints

The study was confined to a limited timeframe and scope, meaning that the thematic analysis was necessarily concise. A more extended study, possibly including interviews with the playwrights or in-depth archival research, could have provided additional perspectives on the portrayal of social injustice in these plays and offered more comprehensive insights into the authors' intentions and the socio-political issues they addressed.

In conclusion, while the study offered valuable insights into the themes of social injustice in *Inheritance* and *The Floods*, these limitations highlighted areas for potential further exploration. Future research might address these gaps, providing a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the plays and their broader implications for post-colonial African literature.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter provided a critical examination of the theme of social injustice in *Inheritance* by David Mulwa and *The Floods* by John Ruganda. By focusing on key themes such as corruption, class struggles, oppression and resistance, this analysis highlighted how both plays critiqued the post-colonial socio-political landscapes of East African literature. These plays exposed the enduring inequities in these societies, offering potent commentaries on political corruption, economic inequality and the marginalization of vulnerable communities.

The findings of this study revealed that both plays highlighted the destructive role of corruption in maintaining systems of exploitation. In *Inheritance*, the political elites in East Africa manipulated power for personal gain, exacerbating class divides and stifling the advancement of marginalized communities.

Similarly, *The Floods* critiqued the violent and corrupt systems, demonstrating how political oppression was used to entrench power and suppress dissent. Both plays vividly illustrated the deep-seated link between corruption and social injustice, showing how it perpetuated economic inequalities and hindered social mobility.

The study also revealed the critical role of class struggles in shaping the characters' lives and the broader socio-political context. In *Inheritance*, the legacy of colonialism entrenched economic divides, with the elite exploiting the poor to maintain their dominance. In *The Floods*, the exploitation of the common people deepened the socio-economic divide, ensuring that the marginalized remained powerless in the face of a repressive regime. The depiction of oppression, in its various forms: political, economic and social, emerged as a central theme in both plays. By denying political rights, stifling dissent and exploiting labor, these systems of oppression prevented marginalized communities from accessing justice and basic human dignity.

However, despite the overwhelming forces of corruption and oppression, both plays also presented resistance as a source of hope and agency. The characters in both *Inheritance* and *The Floods* resisted the oppressive systems in their own ways, whether through direct confrontation or subtle defiance. These moments of resistance, though often met with failure, offered a glimpse of the potential for social transformation and challenged the entrenched power structures. The study also underscored the importance of intersectionality in understanding resistance, as factors like gender, ethnicity and class influenced how individuals navigated and confronted oppression. In a broader sense, the analysis of social injustice in these plays offered valuable insights into the political and economic systems of East Africa. These plays, while set in specific historical contexts, remained relevant to contemporary issues in the region, where corruption, class struggles and oppression continued to affect marginalized communities. The study called for a more equitable society, where continued resistance and collective action could challenge entrenched systems of injustice.

The findings from this analysis also suggested that while systemic change was difficult, it was not impossible.

Resistance, though often fraught with risks and challenges, remained an essential part of the struggle for justice, equality and human dignity. As the plays showed, the fight for social justice is ongoing and even small acts of resistance are crucial in challenging deeply embedded systems of corruption and oppression.

This study opened avenues for further research. Future studies could explore how these themes of corruption, class struggles and resistance manifested in other East African literature. A broader comparative analysis could examine how these themes were represented in different African contexts, offering deeper insights into the shared experiences and unique challenges of various nations. Further research could also investigate the role of gender and ethnicity in shaping experiences of oppression and resistance, helping to build a more nuanced understanding of social injustice in African literature.

While this study offered valuable insights into the thematic exploration of social injustice in *Inheritance* and *The Floods*, its limitations also presented opportunities for further exploration. Future research could explore a wider range of texts, incorporate more historical and political contexts and examine the intersectionality of social injustice with other forms of oppression in East Africa.

Ultimately, this study demonstrated the continued relevance of Mulwa's and Ruganda's plays as critical reflections on the political and socio-economic struggles of East Africa. They offered vital lessons for contemporary efforts toward social justice, urging audiences to reflect on the role of resistance and collective action in creating a more just and equitable society.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provided a summary of the study's purpose, findings, implications, contributions to the field, recommendations for further research and concluding remarks. It aimed to offer a comprehensive reflection on the key themes explored in the research, highlighting the relevance of the plays *Inheritance* by David Mulwa and *The Floods* by John Ruganda in understanding social injustice in East African societies.

5.1.1 Purpose of the Study

The study aimed to critically analyze the theme of social injustice in two East African plays: *Inheritance* by David Mulwa (Kenya) and *The Floods* by John Ruganda (Uganda). The primary purpose was to explore how these plays addressed the social, political and economic inequalities that persisted in East African societies, reflecting broader themes of corruption, class struggles, oppression and resistance.

By examining the depiction of these themes in the context of East Africa, the study sought to provide insights into the role of literature in advocating for social justice and challenging entrenched power structures. The plays served as powerful representations of the socio-political challenges faced by marginalized individuals and groups, particularly in post-independence Kenya and Uganda. Through their vivid portrayals of characters caught in systems of corruption and injustice, Mulwa and Ruganda illuminated the continuing struggles for equality and social change in the region. This study also highlighted the significant role that literature, specifically drama, played in confronting and critiquing societal issues, thus contributing to broader conversations about justice and transformation in post-colonial contexts.

5.1.2 Summary of Key Themes

The central themes explored in this study were corruption, class struggles, oppression and resistance. In *Inheritance* and *The Floods*, these themes were intricately woven into the characters' lives and the socio-political landscapes they inhabited. Through their actions and experiences, the plays highlighted the pervasive nature of corruption within the political and economic systems, which disproportionately affected the poor and disenfranchised.

Social Injustice: Both plays exposed the systemic injustices that permeated East African societies, where those in positions of power exploited the weak, perpetuating a cycle of inequality. The study examined how these injustices were deeply rooted in the fabric of post-colonial societies, affecting all levels of life, from governance to family dynamics.

Corruption: A recurring theme in both plays was the rampant corruption among political elites. These elites were depicted as using their power to accumulate wealth and control, while ordinary citizens suffered the consequences of this exploitation. The study focused on how corruption became a means of social and economic control, perpetuating oppression and inequality.

Class Struggles: Both *Inheritance* and *The Floods* explored the struggles between the privileged elites and the marginalized lower classes. The characters were caught in a struggle for survival, dignity and justice, confronting the oppressive forces that sought to maintain the status quo.

Oppression: The plays illustrated how oppression manifested not only through political systems but also through cultural and social norms. This oppression limited the agency of individuals, particularly those from marginalized groups and served to keep them in a state of subjugation.

Resistance: Finally, both plays emphasized the theme of resistance, which emerged as a powerful means of challenging oppressive structures. Whether through direct action or intellectual resistance, the characters embodied the desire for change and the struggle to overcome the forces that sought to maintain inequality.

These key themes were explored in depth in this study, with a particular focus on how Mulwa and Ruganda used their characters, plotlines and settings to shed light on the realities of life in post-colonial East Africa.

5.1.3 Rationale for Focusing on These Plays

The choice of *Inheritance* and *The Floods* as the focal texts for this study was intentional, as both plays offered rich and nuanced depictions of social injustice in East Africa. The selection of these plays allowed for a comparative analysis of how two different East African countries, Kenya and Uganda, tackled the themes of corruption, class struggles and oppression.

Inheritance was chosen for its direct critique of political and social corruption in post-colonial Kenya, reflecting the realities of power struggles and the ways in which inherited colonial systems continued to affect the political and economic landscape. *The Floods*, on the other hand, provided a portrayal of the oppressive social structures in Uganda, focusing on the personal and collective struggles of ordinary citizens against overwhelming forces of inequality. Together, these plays offered a broad and insightful perspective on the challenges of achieving social justice in the region.

This study was relevant because it not only examined literary works that were critical of societal issues but also aimed to deepen our understanding of how the arts, particularly plays, could serve as a vehicle for social critique and transformation. Furthermore, by focusing on the intersection of politics, culture and social justice, the study contributed to ongoing discussions about the role of African literature in shaping contemporary debates on governance, equality and resistance.

5.2 Summary of Findings

5.2.1 Thematic Analysis Recap

This study provided a thematic analysis of *Inheritance* by David Mulwa and *The Floods* by John Ruganda, focusing on social injustice as represented in both plays. Key themes explored included corruption, class struggles, oppression and the role of resistance in overcoming these societal issues.

In *Inheritance*, Mulwa highlighted the pervasive corruption within political and social structures, particularly focusing on how those in power exploited the common people for personal gain. The theme of corruption was explored through the character of Lacuna Kasoo, who embodied the moral decay of the political elite. Meanwhile, the younger characters, particularly the protagonist, struggled to break free from the shadow of this corruption. The play suggested that the inheritance of power, wealth and social privilege was not just an inheritance of material resources, but of corrupt practices and ideologies that hindered the progress of society.

Similarly, *The Floods* by Ruganda underscored the socioeconomic disparity and social injustice faced by marginalized groups in Uganda. The play used the metaphor of a flood to depict the overwhelming and often destructive forces of oppression, corruption and class struggles. Ruganda portrayed the challenges faced by ordinary citizens as they battled a system rigged in favor of the elites. The characters' fight against these forces revealed the complex and often futile struggle for justice within an oppressive regime.

Both plays presented a similar message: the social order was fundamentally flawed and only through resistance; whether individual or collective; could there be hope for transformation. Through the experiences of the characters, the plays presented corruption and social injustice not as isolated issues, but as deeply embedded in the political and social systems, with widespread consequences for the populace.

5.2.2 Characterization of Resistance

Resistance played a central role in both plays, with characters acting in different ways to challenge social injustices.

In *Inheritance*, the protagonist and other secondary characters demonstrated resistance, albeit in varying forms. While some opted for more subtle forms of resistance such as intellectual critique or subverting traditional systems, others took a more overt stance, confronting corrupt systems directly.

The juxtaposition of these forms of resistance served to illustrate the complexities of challenging powerful and entrenched forces.

In *The Floods*, resistance was also a prominent theme, but it was more collective and communal. The characters, particularly the youth through Nankya and the old through Kyeyune, found solidarity in their shared suffering and were united in their desire for social change. The strength of the resistance in the play lay in its collective nature, as the characters' shared commitment to justice provided a powerful means of confronting the oppressive forces they faced. While resistance in the play was portrayed as a potential means of change, the drama also critiqued the limitations of resistance, highlighting the difficulty of overcoming deeply entrenched systems of corruption and inequality.

Both plays demonstrated that resistance was a complex, multifaceted struggle. While resistance was crucial in challenging social injustice, it often came at a high cost and the success of resistance movements depended on a variety of factors, including the ability to unite and persist in the face of overwhelming power.

5.2.3 Insights on East Africa

The analysis of *Inheritance* and *The Floods* offered valuable insights into the socio-political realities of East Africa. Both plays reflected the ongoing struggles for social justice in the wake of independence, particularly in countries like Kenya and Uganda. The socio-political landscapes depicted in the plays, characterized by corruption, class struggles and oppression, mirrored the real-world challenges faced by many African nations as they navigated the complexities of governance.

In both plays, the legacies of colonialism were evident in the way power was distributed and maintained by elites, who often continued practices of exploitation and control. The plays suggested that while independence had brought political change, it had not necessarily resulted in social and economic equity. Rather, the structures of power and wealth remained concentrated in the hands of a few, leaving the majority of citizens to suffer from systemic inequality and oppression.

The plays also offered a critique of leadership, portraying the political class as disconnected from the needs of the people. Through the characters' struggles against these systems, the plays demonstrated how social injustice in East Africa is not simply a consequence of colonial rule but was perpetuated by those who inherited power in this era.

Ultimately, *Inheritance* and *The Floods* served as reflections on the slow pace of change in East Africa, calling attention to the ongoing need for reform and resistance. These insights emphasized the importance of continued efforts to address the root causes of social injustice and to create a more just and equitable society for future generations.

5.3 Implications of the Study

5.3.1 Broader Social and Political Implications

This study had significant implications for understanding the socio-political challenges faced by East African societies, particularly in relation to corruption, class struggles and oppression. By analyzing *Inheritance* and *The Floods*, it became evident that social injustices were deeply embedded in the fabric of African nations. These injustices were not merely abstract or historical; they continued to influence contemporary political, social and economic structures in countries like Kenya and Uganda.

The representation of corruption and class struggles in the plays offered a lens through which we could examine how political elites, often driven by self-interest, perpetuated systems of inequality that disproportionately affected marginalized communities. The thematic portrayal of the haves versus the have-nots in both plays highlighted the pervasive and entrenched nature of these inequalities. This was particularly relevant today, as many East African countries continued to grapple with similar issues in both their governance and societal development. By showing how political corruption and social injustice hindered the progress of entire societies, the plays underscored the urgent need for reform and collective action.

Moreover, the study drew attention to the deep-seated effects of colonialism, which continued to echo in the structures of governance and in the public's relationship to state power. The resistance depicted in both plays offered hope that social change was possible but also emphasized the cost of such change, which often came with personal sacrifice and suffering.

5.3.2 Role of Resistance in Social Change

One of the most important implications of this study was the recognition of resistance as a key force for social change. Both *Inheritance* and *The Floods* explored the role of individual and collective action against systemic oppression, offering valuable insights into how resistance movements challenged power structures.

In the plays, resistance was not portrayed as a passive act, but as an active, sometimes violent, struggle against the forces that maintained corruption and inequality. The plays also highlighted the complexities of resistance: it was often fragmented, internalized and fraught with contradictions. Characters in both plays wrestled with the tension between self-preservation and the desire for social change.

However, their acts of resistance, whether through direct confrontation with corrupt systems or more subtle forms of protest, served as a reminder that change was possible, even in the face of overwhelming odds.

This aspect of resistance was critical for understanding not only the literary representations of social justice but also its real-world application. In the context of East Africa, where political oppression and economic disparities persisted, the study emphasized the need for continued resistance in various forms, be it in activism, community organizing or through the arts. The portrayal of resistance in the plays showed that, despite the challenges, it remained a vital avenue for dismantling entrenched systems of injustice.

5.3.3 Relevance of Themes to Contemporary Society

The themes explored in both *Inheritance* and *The Floods* continued to resonate in contemporary East African societies. Oppression, corruption and the struggle for equality are still prevalent in many East African nations, and the plays' exploration of these themes provided a crucial perspective on ongoing challenges. The ongoing fight against corruption, the persistence of social inequalities and the rise of youth-led movements in East Africa reflects the themes depicted in the plays. For example, the representation of youth in both plays as agents of change aligned with the current youth activism seen across the region, notably in movements such as Kenya's #StopTheSteal and Uganda's #FreeUganda protests.

Furthermore, the exploration of resistance in the plays spoke to the global struggle for social justice, particularly in regions where authoritarianism and inequality persisted. The plays offered not only a critique of the East African injustice landscape but also an invitation for global audiences to reflect on the universal themes of oppression and the struggle for a more just society.

In contemporary East Africa, where democratic processes were still evolving and social inequality remained a significant issue, the themes explored in these plays could inspire dialogue about the mechanisms for social change. They suggested that while the fight for justice might be long and arduous, it was not in vain, highlighting the importance of holding power accountable and challenging oppressive systems.

5.4 Contributions to the Field

5.4.1 Contribution to African Literature Studies

This study made a significant contribution to African literature, particularly within the subfield of East African drama. The exploration of social injustice in *Inheritance* by David Mulwa and *The Floods* by John Ruganda provided a deeper understanding of how drama serves as a critical tool in reflecting and critiquing the socio-political dynamics in East Africa. The thematic focus on corruption, class struggles, oppression and resistance was an important addition to the academic discourse surrounding African literature, as it highlighted the enduring impact of colonial legacies on contemporary societal structures.

The study underscored the power of drama as a medium for examining complex social issues, especially in East Africa, where political and economic inequalities continued to persist. By focusing on how these plays exposed the systemic exploitation of marginalized communities, this research emphasized the ability of African playwrights to utilize theatre not only as an artistic expression but also as a powerful political tool to advocate for social justice. In this sense, the study contributed to the recognition of African drama as an essential genre in the larger narrative of East African literature, broadening the scope of scholarship beyond plays and prose.

5.4.2 Critical Reflection on Existing Literature

This study presented a critical examination of existing scholarship on East African literature, especially concerning social injustice and resistance in East African contexts. While previous research had explored themes of corruption, oppression and class struggles in African literature, much of the focus had often been on novels and historical analyses, leaving a gap in the exploration of these themes within East African drama. By focusing specifically on *Inheritance* and *The Floods*, this study brought attention to the unique role of drama in addressing these issues.

It challenged existing scholarship by highlighting that, even in the face of overwhelming oppression, the characters' resistance, though often unsuccessful, played a crucial role in critiquing the status quo.

In contrast to the often fatalistic portrayal of post-colonial struggles in some academic literature, this study emphasized the importance of persistence and hope, suggesting that resistance, no matter how small, could engender meaningful change. Furthermore, it critically engaged with the way drama, as an art form, exposed the personal and collective dimensions of social injustice, offering insights into how literature could drive societal reflection and transformation.

5.4.3 Contribution to Understanding Resistance in Literature

This study expanded the understanding of resistance in African literature, particularly in the context of plays, where the immediacy and power of performance could heighten the emotional and political impact of themes such as oppression and rebellion. Through a detailed analysis of the characters in *Inheritance* and *The Floods*, the research explored the different manifestations of resistance, ranging from overt political activism to subtle defiance against entrenched systems. By doing so, it provided a fresh lens through which to view resistance in African literature, showing that even acts of resistance that might have appeared insignificant in the face of institutionalized power were, in fact, vital in challenging oppressive systems.

Moreover, the study made a compelling case for the role of plays in engaging audiences with the realities of political and social struggles. It demonstrated how plays like *Inheritance* and *The Floods* used dramatic conflict and characterization to explore the emotional and psychological effects of resistance on individuals and communities.

This contribution helped bridge the gap between theory and practice by showing how literature and drama could serve as both a reflection of societal conditions and a tool for change.

5.4.4 Expanding the Discourse on Social Justice in African Plays

Lastly, this research contributed to the ongoing discourse on social justice in African plays by providing a thorough examination of how playwrights in East Africa addressed issues of corruption, oppression and class struggles that continued to define the region's socio-political landscapes.

By focusing on the two selected plays, the study demonstrated how these works not only critiqued the failures of governance but also highlighted the ongoing struggles of marginalized communities to assert their rights and achieve justice.

In doing so, it urged a re-examination of the role of literature in shaping public discourse and social movements in Africa. The study called for a broader appreciation of African plays as a medium that did not simply reflect social problems but actively participated in the dialogue about their resolution. It encouraged future research into how drama could be used not only to critique social injustice but also to inspire collective action, further strengthening the connection between literature and political change.

5.5 Recommendations for Further Research

The insights gleaned from this study opened up numerous avenues for further research, focusing on the ways in which East African plays engaged with themes of corruption, resistance and class struggles. The following recommendations aimed to expand and deepen the analysis of social injustice in East African plays, offering opportunities for future scholars to explore these themes in greater depth and from diverse perspectives:

5.5.1 Comparative Studies Across East African Contexts

While this study had focused on plays from Kenya and Uganda, further research could be broadened the scope by exploring how different East African playwrights engage with themes of social injustice within their specific national contexts. Comparative studies across countries like Tanzania, Rwanda or Ethiopia can offer a more comprehensive understanding of regional variations in how corruption, oppression, class struggles and resistance are represented. For instance, examining the political and socio-economic contexts of Tanzania's socialist policies or Rwanda's post-genocide society can provide unique perspectives on how these themes are portrayed in literature and plays across East Africa.

5.5.2 The Role of Gender and Ethnicity in Social Injustice

This study had touched on the intersectionality of gender and class, but there was significant potential for deeper exploration of how these factors shaped the portrayal of social injustice in East African plays. Future research can focus on the experiences of marginalized women or ethnic minorities in East African societies, particularly how their struggles for justice and equality are represented in plays. Analyzing gendered and ethnic experiences of oppression in specific plays can reveal how playwrights address these issues within the broader framework of socio-political power dynamics in East Africa. Such research would enrich the understanding of how East African plays reflect complex social hierarchies and intersecting forms of oppression.

5.5.3 Grassroots Movements and Collective Resistance in East African Plays

While this study had emphasized individual acts of resistance, future research could explore how grassroots movements and collective resistance are depicted in East African dramas. This includes an examination of how playwrights represent community actions, protests and social movements in their works.

By studying plays that depicted collective resistance to oppressive regimes or corrupt systems, researchers could explore the dynamics of solidarity, the challenges of organizing and the impact of communal action on social change. This could also include looking at the representation of unions, civic organizations or youth movements within the plays, examining their role in resisting injustice and advocating for social transformation.

5.5.4 Historical and Political Contextualization in East African Plays

This study had examined the political contexts of Kenya and Uganda, but future research could provide a more in-depth historical analysis of how East African playwrights engaged with specific political events and transitions. For example, research can explore how the legacies of independence movements, civil wars or authoritarian regimes shape the thematic content of East African drama. The transition from colonial to independent states in East Africa, as well as the socio-political challenges of the post-independence period,

would provide a richer historical background for understanding the plays' critiques of corruption, class inequality and resistance. Understanding these historical contexts would deepened the interpretation of East African plays and how they continued to reflect the region's ongoing socio-political struggles.

5.5.5 Exploring the Role of Language, Symbolism and Performance in Depicting Social Injustice

Future studies could focus on the unique role of language and performance techniques in communicating themes of social injustice in East African plays. Analyzing the specific use of local languages, dialects and cultural references in plays could offer insight into how playwrights connected with local audiences and used language to challenge power structures. Moreover, a deeper exploration of symbolism and metaphors in the plays, such as the symbolic use of "inheritance" in Mulwa's play or "The Floods" in Ruganda's work, could provid more layers of meaning in the representation of social and political issues. Analyzing how symbolism in East African dramas reflected the lived experiences of the people could offer new ways of interpreting the plays' critiques of corruption, oppression, class struggles and resistance.

5.5.6 Thematic Connections Across Different Literary Forms

This study had focused on plays, but there was potential for further research to explore the thematic connections between drama and other forms of East African literature, such as novels, poetry and oral traditions. Comparing how the themes of corruption, oppression, class struggles and resistance are represented across different genres can provide a broader understanding of how these issues are addressed in East African literature as a whole. Research can also examine how contemporary playwrights draw upon or responded to the literary traditions of previous generations and how the evolving social and political landscape of East Africa influence the representation of these themes in diverse artistic forms.

5.5.7 The Role of Plays in Social and Political Change in East Africa

Future research can investigate the role of East African plays in driving social and political change. Scholars can explore how playwrights use the stage as a platform for critique, mobilizing public opinion and influencing political discourse. This can include a closer examination of the relationship between drama and activism in East Africa, looking at the role of plays in movements for democracy, human rights and anti-corruption. By analyzing plays alongside real-world political events, researchers can explore how theatre reflects, shapes or even influences public consciousness around issues of social justice and political accountability.

5.5.8 The Impact of Censorship on East African Plays

Given the political sensitivity of many of the themes explored in East African plays, another area for future research could be the impact of censorship on the production and reception of plays in the region. How do playwrights navigate the boundaries set by government censorship or social taboos when addressing themes of corruption, class struggles, oppression and resistance? Research can examine the strategies playwrights use to circumvent censorship or the ways in which drama adapts to survive in repressive environments. Exploring these dynamics would have provided important insight into the resilience of East African plays and its continued role in confronting socio-political challenges.

5.6 Concluding Remarks

5.6.1 Summary of the Research Process

This study explored the portrayal of social injustice in two key East African plays: *Inheritance* by David Mulwa and *The Floods* by John Ruganda. Through a critical thematic analysis, the study examined how both plays reflected the pervasive issues of corruption, class struggles, oppression and resistance within the socio-political contexts of Kenya and Uganda. The research process involved a close reading of the plays, focusing on the representation of marginalized voices and the power structures that perpetuated social inequality.

One of the key challenges in this research was narrowing the scope to just these two plays, which limited the diversity of perspectives that could be examined. However, this limitation allowed for a deep, focused analysis of how these specific works reflected broader social issues in the region. The analysis highlighted the crucial role that literature played in not only depicting social injustices but also in provoking critical conversations about change and resistance. This process underscored the continued relevance of these plays in contemporary East African theatre.

5.6.2 Final Thoughts on the Role of Resistance

The study demonstrated that resistance was a central theme in both *Inheritance* and *The Floods*. Despite the overwhelming forces of oppression and corruption depicted in the plays, characters found ways to resist through overt actions, subversive tactics and even through their endurance and survival. Resistance was not always a direct confrontation but took various forms, from defiance to silent rebellion. This study affirmed the notion that resistance, while often difficult and fraught with danger, was an essential mechanism for social transformation.

Furthermore, the plays illustrated that resistance was not merely an individual pursuit but a collective one. The characters' struggles and sacrifices reflected a larger, communal fight for justice and equality, urging the audience to recognize their own roles in confronting systems of oppression. Ultimately, these works underscored the power of literature to both reflect and inspire social change, reinforcing the importance of resistance as a vital component in the quest for social justice in East Africa and beyond.

5.6.3 Call to Action

The analysis of social injustice in *Inheritance* and *The Floods* called for a deeper reflection on the contemporary issues facing East African societies. While both plays provided critical insights into the mechanisms of political and economic exploitation, they also highlighted the enduring relevance of resistance and collective action in the fight for social justice.

The study encouraged readers, scholars and activists to engage with the themes presented in these plays and to recognize the importance of challenging entrenched systems of power. As we continued to address issues such as corruption, class struggles and oppression, these plays served as a poignant reminder that meaningful change required persistent and collective action. The resistance depicted in both works should inspire contemporary efforts to confront and dismantle unjust systems and work toward a more equitable and just society.

This study urged a renewed commitment to social justice, with an emphasis on solidarity, resilience and resistance in the face of adversity. By drawing from the lessons within *Inheritance* and *The Floods*, there was potential for real-world impact in addressing the social injustices that continued to affect marginalized communities across East Africa. The fight for justice was ongoing, and these plays reminded us that, despite the challenges, the pursuit of social equity remained a vital and necessary endeavor.

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REF: MKU/ISERC/4743
TO: SIMIYU S. STANFORD

Date: 03 February 2025

REG: MELIT/2023/57170

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL INJUSTICE IN TWO SELECTED EAST AFRICAN PLAYS

This is to inform you that **Mount Kenya University** has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is **3465**. The approval period is **03/02/2025 - 02/02/2026**.

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

- i. Only approved documents including informed consents, study instruments, MTA will be used
- ii. All changes including amendments, deviations and violations are submitted for review and approval by **Mount Kenya University**
- iii. Death and life threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to **Mount Kenya University** within 72 hours of notification
- iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affect the safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to **Mount Kenya University** within 72 hours
- v. Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions
- vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal
- vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to **Mount Kenya University**

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Alfred Owino, PhD
Chairman, Mount Kenya University ISERC



Mount Kenya University



DIRECTORATE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

MELIT/2023/57170

4th February, 2025

*National Commission for Science Technology & Innovation (NACOSTI)
Off Waiyaki Way, Upper Kabete,
P.O Box 30623- 00100
NAIROBI, KENYA*

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: SIMIYU S. STANFORD – REGISTRATION NO. MELIT/2023/57170


The purpose of this letter is to introduce the above named student who is pursuing **Master of Arts in English Literature** in the department of **Psychology, Languages and Humanities** in the school of **Social Science**.

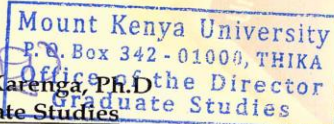
The title of the research is **“A Critical Analysis of Social Injustice in Two Selected East African Plays.”**

It has been cleared by the University’s Ethics Review Committee (Certificate attached) and now has to proceed to the field to collect data between **February, 2025 and April, 2025**.

Any assistance accorded to the student will be highly appreciated.

Thank you.


Dr. Samuel M. Karenga, Ph.D
Director, Graduate Studies
Enc.



Main Campus, General Kago Road, P.O. Box 342-01000 Thika.
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NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: 469424

Date of Issue:

11/March/2025

RESEARCH LICENSE



This is to Certify that Mr.. Stanford Said Simiyu of Mount Kenya University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Elgeyo-Marakwet on the topic: A critical analysis of social injustice in two selected East African plays for the period ending : 11/March/2026.

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National Commission for Science, Technology and
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