Leadership Ethics and the Power of Communication: A Comparative Analysis of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100900578

Received: 24 September 2026; Accepted: 29 September 2026; Published: 17 October 2026

ABSTRACT

Leadership ethics and communication have received increasing scholarly attention across leadership studies; however, their integrated examination in comparative literary studies remains limited. This study investigates how leadership ethics and the power of communication are represented in William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. This study uses a qualitative comparative research design and employs close reading, interpretive textual analysis, and thematic analysis to examine how ethical leadership, persuasive communication, moral decision-making, and rhetorical strategies shape authority and influence societal outcomes in the two texts. The analysis reveals that both Shakespeare and Achebe portray leadership as a moral and communicative practice rather than merely the exercise of authority. In *Julius Caesar*, Brutus's ethical idealism and Antony's rhetorical mastery demonstrate how persuasive discourse constructs political legitimacy and transforms public opinion. In *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo's failure to balance moral responsibility with dialogue, empathy, and adaptability contributes to both his personal downfall and the fragmentation of his community. Despite their distinct historical and cultural settings, both works demonstrate that ethical judgment and effective communication are fundamental to sustaining legitimate leadership and social cohesion. By comparatively examining Renaissance political tragedy and African postcolonial fiction, this study contributes to comparative literary criticism by integrating leadership ethics and communication as complementary analytical perspectives. The findings further suggest that literature offers enduring insights into leadership ethics and the communicative practices that shape authority, collective identity, and social stability across cultures.

Keywords: *Leadership ethics; communication; rhetoric; comparative literature; Julius Caesar; Things Fall Apart*

INTRODUCTION

Leadership and communication are two of the most powerful forces that shape societies, politics, and culture throughout history. Communities and nations have long depended on leaders who can guide people, make sound decisions, and communicate their visions effectively. Contemporary leadership scholarship emphasizes that effective leadership extends beyond authority and administrative competence to encompass ethical responsibility, integrity, and the ability to communicate transparently and persuasively (Brown et al., 2005; Northouse, 2022). The success or failure of leaders depends not only on their personal qualities, such as courage, intelligence, and moral judgment, but also on how they communicate their ideas, persuade others, and

make decisions that influence the lives of those around them (Hackman & Johnson, 2018). Leaders who communicate effectively inspire trust, foster unity, and mobilize people toward shared goals, whereas ineffective communication often results in misunderstanding, conflict, and institutional instability (Men, 2021). Literature, as a reflection of human society, offers numerous examples of leadership struggles, demonstrating how ambition, ethics, pride, silence, and communication determine the fate of individuals and communities. Through literary texts, readers gain valuable insights into how leaders' choices, actions, and words shape not only their own destinies but also the societies they govern (Ciulla, 2020).

This study scrutinizes the relationship between leadership ethics and the power of communication in William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Although these works were written in different historical periods and cultural contexts, they present enduring lessons about the qualities of ethical leadership, the consequences of poor decision-making, and the role of communication in shaping public opinion and social outcomes. Leadership scholars increasingly argue that ethical leadership involves moral responsibility, fairness, accountability, and responsible communication rather than merely possessing authority or power (Northouse, 2022; Pletz et al., 2025). Both literary works demonstrate that effective leadership requires balancing personal ambition with collective welfare while exercising sound ethical judgment and persuasive communication.

In *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare portrays Rome as a society in which political ambition, personal interests, and betrayal intersect to determine the destiny of the Republic. The play illustrates how speeches, silence, and rhetorical persuasion influence public opinion and political legitimacy. Brutus and Antony demonstrate that communication functions not merely as a means of expression but as a powerful political instrument capable of uniting, dividing, and manipulating society (Charteris-Black, 2018). Shakespeare raises profound ethical questions concerning leadership by exploring whether Caesar's ambition justified political opposition, whether Brutus' assassination of Caesar constituted moral responsibility or political misjudgement, and how ambition, pride, and persuasive rhetoric contribute to political instability. Recent studies in Shakespearean works suggest that the play presents leadership as an ethical challenge in which moral judgment and rhetorical competence are inseparable from political authority (Gray, 2016; Cavanagh, 2024). Consequently, *Julius Caesar* demonstrates that ethical leadership is essential to social stability and that failures in moral judgment and communication can lead to personal tragedy and political chaos.

Similarly, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* explores leadership in traditional Igbo society in precolonial Nigeria, where communal responsibility, cultural values, and ethical conduct form the foundation of social order. The novel portrays Okonkwo as a respected leader whose excessive pride, emotional rigidity, and inability to communicate effectively ultimately lead to his downfall. Achebe demonstrates that leadership based solely on authority and physical strength, without empathy, dialogue, or ethical sensitivity, cannot sustain communal harmony (Achebe, 1994). The arrival of British colonialism further confronts traditional leadership structures, highlighting the role of adaptability, wisdom, and moral responsibility during periods of social transformation. Contemporary postcolonial critics believe that Achebe presents leadership as a communal, not individual, responsibility, emphasizing dialogue, consensus, and cultural continuity over authoritarian power (Nnoromele, 2000). Through Okonkwo's experiences, Achebe illustrates that leaders who ignore communication, reject collective wisdom, and fail to understand their communities' risks both personal failure and societal fragmentation.

By comparing the Roman political system and Igbo traditional society, this study argues that despite cultural and historical differences, the ethical qualities of leadership and effective communication remain central to the success of both leaders and their societies. Both Shakespeare and Achebe show that leadership is not confined to power or personal interest; it depends on honesty, moral responsibility, and the ability to influence and guide others positively. These works show that ambition without ethics and communication can lead to downfall, while responsible leadership builds trust, stability, and progress. Leadership guided by morality and effective communication strengthens society, while failure in these areas can lead to chaos, conflict, and the loss of communal harmony. Through these two literary works, readers can understand the delicate balance between ambition, ethics, and communication, and learn how leadership decisions shape not just individual destinies but the fate of entire communities.

1.1. Background of the Study:

Leadership, Ethics, and Communication in Literary Studies:

Leadership and communication are important concerns in literary studies because literary narratives provide ways of examining power, ethical judgment, persuasion, and social relationships. Through characterization, dialogue, rhetoric, and narrative conflict, literary works explore how leadership practices and communicative strategies influence individuals and communities (Morrell, 2010; Colton, 2020). Literary narratives can also provide valuable insights into ethical leadership by presenting complex moral choices and their consequences (Watts et al., 2018). Moreover, rhetoric is closely connected with leadership because leaders use language to influence followers, construct legitimacy, and mobilize collective action (Hühn & Meyer, 2023). An interdisciplinary approach combining literary analysis, leadership ethics, and communication therefore provides an appropriate basis for examining how ethical conduct and communication shape authority and social outcomes in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.

Similarly, Leadership researchers argue that leadership should not be understood merely as the exercise of authority or administrative competence but as a moral and relational process grounded in integrity, justice, accountability, and effective communication. Ethical leadership requires leaders to influence others through honesty, fairness, transparency, and responsible decision-making rather than pressure or manipulation. Communication therefore becomes an indispensable element of ethical leadership because it empowers leaders to establish trust, inspire confidence, resolve conflicts, and promote collective action. Recent literature demonstrates that communication, trust, moral influence, and dialogue have become among the most significant themes in contemporary ethical leadership research, indicating that leadership effectiveness depends as much on ethical communication as on political authority or personal capability (Brown et al., 2005; Northouse, 2022; Pletz et al., 2025).

Within this broader scholarly context, William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* remains one of the most influential literary explorations of political leadership, ethical responsibility, and rhetorical persuasion. Set against the political instability of ancient Rome, the play portrays the complex moral dilemmas confronting leaders whose personal ambitions frequently conflict with civic responsibility. Shakespeare presents Julius Caesar, Brutus, Cassius, and Mark Antony as figures whose leadership is defined not only by political power but also by their ethical decisions and communicative strategies. Rather than depicting leadership as a fixed quality, Shakespeare demonstrates that political legitimacy depends upon public perception, moral judgment, and the effective use of rhetoric. Contemporary Shakespearean criticism increasingly interprets *Julius Caesar* as a study of ethical leadership in which rhetoric functions both as an instrument of democratic participation and as a means of political manipulation. Patrick Colm Hogan (2022), for example, argues that the play exposes the tension between ethical intention and persuasive rhetoric by revealing how public speeches often conceal personal motivations behind claims of political virtue.

One of the defining features of *Julius Caesar* is Shakespeare's sophisticated portrayal of political communication. The funeral speeches delivered by Brutus and Antony remain among the most celebrated examples of persuasive discourse in English literature because they demonstrate how language can transform political reality. Brutus appeals to logic, patriotism, and republican ideals to justify Caesar's assassination, whereas Antony employs emotional appeal, irony, repetition, and strategic ambiguity to reshape public opinion against the conspirators. Their contrasting rhetorical approaches illustrate that communication is not merely a way of expressing ideas but a powerful weapon of legitimizing authority, mobilizing citizens, and altering the course of history. Recent studies continue to highlight the relevance of these speeches for understanding political communication, arguing that Shakespeare anticipated many contemporary concerns regarding public persuasion, populism, and the ethical responsibilities associated with rhetorical leadership. Mwanthi (2025), for instance, demonstrates that failures of communication, ignored counsel, and manipulative rhetoric in *Julius Caesar* offer enduring lessons for contemporary governance, conflict resolution, and democratic leadership.

Similarly, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* presents an equally profound examination of leadership, although within the distinct cultural and historical context of precolonial Igbo society. Unlike Shakespeare's focus on republican politics, Achebe explores leadership as a communal and cultural responsibility deeply

embedded within indigenous traditions, collective values, and social relationships. Leadership in the novel is not measured solely by personal strength or authority but by wisdom, justice, respect for tradition, and commitment to communal harmony. Through the character of Okonkwo, Achebe demonstrates how excessive pride, emotional rigidity, and an inability to communicate effectively undermine ethical leadership despite personal achievements and social status. The novel thus portrays leadership as a moral obligation requiring empathy, dialogue, and cultural sensitivity rather than domination or individual ambition.

Communication occupies an equally significant position in *Things Fall Apart*. Achebe represents language through proverbs, folktales, storytelling, public deliberation, and communal dialogue, all of which function as indigenous systems of knowledge and ethical reasoning. Proverbs, famously described in the novel as "the palm oil with which words are eaten," symbolize wisdom, diplomacy, and collective memory, enabling leaders to negotiate conflict and maintain social cohesion. However, the arrival of British colonial administration and Christian missionaries introduces new systems of authority and communication that gradually weaken traditional leadership structures. As indigenous modes of dialogue are displaced by colonial institutions, communal relationships deteriorate, resulting in cultural fragmentation and personal tragedy. Jonathan Gosling (2017) argues that Achebe's novel provides an important framework for understanding leadership during periods of profound social disruption, emphasizing that effective leadership requires ethical judgment capable of responding to radical cultural change rather than merely preserving established authority.

Recent Achebe research similarly emphasizes that *Things Fall Apart* should be understood not only as a foundational postcolonial novel but also as a sophisticated exploration of leadership, cultural identity, moral responsibility, and communication. Critics note that Achebe challenges colonial representations of African societies by portraying Igbo political institutions as complex systems governed by consultation, consensus, customary law, and ethical accountability rather than authoritarian rule. At the same time, the novel illustrates that leadership failures arise not simply from colonial intervention but also from individual shortcomings, particularly Okonkwo's inability to balance courage with compassion and authority with dialogue. Consequently, the novel presents ethical leadership as a dynamic process requiring adaptability, humility, and meaningful communication within changing social environments.

Although *Julius Caesar* and *Things Fall Apart* originate from different literary traditions, historical periods, and cultural contexts, both texts investigate remarkably similar questions concerning authority, morality, communication, and the exercise of power. Shakespeare examines political leadership within the republican institutions of ancient Rome, whereas Achebe explores communal leadership within traditional Igbo society confronting colonial transformation. Despite these contextual differences, both authors demonstrate that leadership cannot be separated from ethical responsibility or communicative competence. Leaders rise or fall not solely because of military strength, political authority, or social status but because of their moral choices, rhetorical abilities, and relationships with the communities they serve. These shared concerns provide a strong foundation for comparative literary analysis, allowing scholars to examine universal principles of leadership while acknowledging the cultural specificity of ethical values and communicative practices.

Despite the extensive research devoted separately to Shakespeare and Achebe, comparatively little research has examined these two canonical texts through the integrated perspectives of leadership ethics and communication. Existing studies frequently emphasize political rhetoric in *Julius Caesar* or postcolonial identity in *Things Fall Apart*, yet relatively few investigate how ethical leadership and communication interact to determine the success or failure of leaders across both works. Moreover, comparative literary scholarship has seldom brought Renaissance political tragedy and African postcolonial fiction into dialogue through contemporary ethical leadership theory. This gap indicates the need for an interdisciplinary comparative study that synthesizes literary criticism, leadership studies, and communication theory to provide a more comprehensive understanding of authority, persuasion, and moral responsibility.

1.2 Problem Statement

Leadership ethics and communication have become important areas of interdisciplinary research because effective leadership depends not only on moral responsibility but also on the ability to communicate ethically as well as persuasively. Recent leadership studies emphasize that ethical decision-making, transparency, and

communication are fundamental to building trust, legitimacy, and social cohesion (Northouse, 2022; Pletz et al., 2025). These perspectives have also influenced literary scholarship, where leadership is increasingly examined as a reflection of ethical values and social responsibility.

William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* have been widely studied for their portrayals of leadership, power, and social change. Existing scholarship on *Julius Caesar* primarily focuses on political rhetoric, persuasion, and moral conflict (Gray, 2016; Hogan, 2022), while studies on *Things Fall Apart* emphasize indigenous leadership, cultural identity, and the effects of colonialism on traditional authority (Gosling, 2017). Although these studies provide valuable insights, they largely examine the texts independently within their respective literary traditions.

There remains limited comparative research that investigates how leadership ethics and the power of communication jointly influence leadership success and failure across these two works. In particular, the relationship between ethical leadership, persuasive communication, moral decision-making, and leadership outcomes has not been sufficiently explored within a cross-cultural comparative framework. This gap restricts a broader understanding of how literature represents leadership as both an ethical and communicative practice.

Therefore, this study comparatively examines Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* to explore how leadership ethics and communication shape authority, influence public perception, and determine the rise and fall of leaders. By integrating literary criticism with contemporary leadership theory, the study contributes to comparative literary scholarship and offers a deeper understanding of leadership as a culturally situated yet universally significant phenomenon.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to comparatively examine how William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* represent leadership ethics and the power of communication in shaping authority, influencing society, and determining the success or failure of leaders.

The specific objectives are:

1. To examine the portrayal of ethical and unethical leadership in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.

2. To analyze the role of communication, including rhetoric, persuasion, dialogue, and silence, in shaping leadership and influencing individuals and society in both texts.

3. To investigate how leadership ethics and communication contribute to the construction, exercise, and decline of leadership within the political and cultural contexts of the two works.

4. To compare the representations of leadership ethics and communication in *Julius Caesar* and *Things Fall Apart* to identify their similarities, differences, and contemporary implications for ethical leadership.

1.4 Limitations of the Study

Despite its analytical value, this research has some limitations that should be recognized. First, the study is limited to a comparative analysis of only two literary texts: William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. While these works offer rich insights into leadership ethics and communication, the findings may not be representative of broader literary traditions or other historical and cultural contexts. Second, the study relies primarily on textual and qualitative analysis. As a result, interpretations of leadership, ethics, and communication are inherently subjective and influenced by the researcher's critical perspective. Alternative readings or theoretical approaches may yield different conclusions. Third, the research focuses mainly on major characters and key speeches or communicative moments, which may overlook the roles of minor characters or less explicit forms of communication that also contribute to the leadership dynamics within the texts.

Finally, the study does not incorporate extensive interdisciplinary frameworks such as political science, psychology, or leadership studies in depth. Instead, it remains grounded in literary analysis, which may limit its applicability to empirical or practical leadership contexts.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This methodology enables a systematic exploration of how ethical leadership and effective communication shape individual and societal outcomes in literature. The comparative analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of leadership practices across different cultural contexts and highlights the continuing relevance of ethical communication in leadership studies.

1.6 Scope for future research:

The study is limited to the examination of leadership ethics and communication in *Julius Caesar* and *Things Fall Apart*. It does not attempt a complete analysis of all political, historical, cultural, or postcolonial aspects of the texts except where they directly relate to leadership and communication.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership and communication have become increasingly important areas of interdisciplinary research, attracting attention from scholars in literature, leadership studies, political science, and communication studies. Recent scholarship argues that leadership extends beyond the exercise of authority to include ethical responsibility, moral judgment, and the ability to communicate effectively. Ethical leadership is now widely understood as a relational process in which leaders establish legitimacy through integrity, accountability, dialogue, and persuasive communication rather than through power alone (Northouse, 2022; Pletz et al., 2025).

The current leadership communication research has similarly shifted its focus from leadership traits to communication practices. Liu et al. (2023), in a comprehensive review of 260 empirical studies published in *The Leadership Quarterly*, conclude that communication is fundamental to leadership because it shapes trust, organizational commitment, follower engagement, and collective decision-making. Their review demonstrates that leaders influence others not merely through authority but through rhetorical competence, dialogue, emotional expression, and ethical communication. Communication therefore functions as both a practical leadership skill and a moral responsibility that determines the legitimacy of leadership itself.

These developments have influenced literary studies, where researchers increasingly examine literary texts as representations of ethical leadership and communicative practice. Rather than viewing literature solely as artistic expression, contemporary critics argue that literary works provide valuable insights into the ethical dilemmas, political conflicts, and communicative strategies that characterize leadership in different societies. Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* exemplify this trend because both texts investigate how leadership succeeds or fails through the interaction of morality, persuasion, and public communication.

The present Shakespearean research has moved beyond traditional historical and political interpretations of *Julius Caesar* by examining ethical leadership, civic responsibility, and rhetorical persuasion. Gray (2016) argues that Shakespeare deliberately portrays political leadership as morally complex rather than presenting clear distinctions between virtuous and corrupt rulers. Caesar's pride, Brutus' idealism, and Antony's political pragmatism illustrate that leadership involves competing ethical obligations rather than absolute moral certainty. Leadership therefore becomes a process of negotiating personal conviction, public duty, and political responsibility.

Communication occupies an equally central position in recent studies of *Julius Caesar*. Rather than treating Brutus' and Antony's funeral speeches simply as examples of classical rhetoric, contemporary scholars interpret them as demonstrations of how persuasive communication constructs political legitimacy. Cavanagh (2024) argues that Shakespeare's representation of friendship, reconciliation, and political dialogue reveals leadership as a communal rather than purely individual responsibility. The play suggests that public trust

depends upon ethical communication capable of sustaining social cohesion rather than advancing personal ambition.

Recent research also highlights communication failure as a central cause of political instability in *Julius Caesar*. Mwanthi (2025) examines the play through the lens of conflict resolution and argues that ignored advice, rhetorical manipulation, and failures of dialogue contribute directly to violence and institutional collapse. By relating Shakespeare's tragedy to contemporary political crises, the study demonstrates that transparent, inclusive, and empathetic communication is essential for sustainable leadership and democratic governance. Rather than depicting communication as a neutral instrument, Shakespeare presents language as a force capable of strengthening or destroying political communities depending upon how it is ethically employed.

Similarly, contemporary studies on *Things Fall Apart* have expanded beyond postcolonial interpretations to investigate leadership, ethics, communication, and indigenous knowledge systems. Scholars increasingly argue that Achebe presents leadership as a communal responsibility grounded in cultural values, consultation, and moral accountability. Unlike authoritarian models of leadership, Igbo society distributes authority through elders, titled men, and communal deliberation, illustrating that leadership derives from collective legitimacy rather than individual power.

Gosling (2017) argues that *Things Fall Apart* offers important lessons for leadership studies because it demonstrates that successful leadership requires adaptability, ethical judgment, and responsiveness to social change. Okonkwo's tragedy lies not simply in colonial intervention but also in his inability to balance courage with empathy and authority with dialogue. His rigid understanding of masculinity prevents him from responding constructively to changing circumstances, ultimately contributing to both personal failure and communal fragmentation. This interpretation positions Achebe's novel as an important contribution to interdisciplinary leadership studies.

Communication likewise occupies a central role in Achebe's representation of leadership. Oral traditions, storytelling, proverbs, and communal dialogue function as systems of ethical reasoning, conflict resolution, and social cohesion. Recent scholarship argues that Achebe's use of proverbs extends beyond cultural representation to become a form of political and ethical discourse. Shalghin et al. (2026) demonstrate that proverbial language in *Things Fall Apart* functions as social reasoning and collective memory while resisting colonial systems of authority. Rather than serving decorative purposes, proverbs become instruments through which communities negotiate justice, preserve cultural identity, and exercise moral leadership.

Furthermore, postcolonial studies similarly emphasize communication as a form of cultural resistance. Al-Ghammaz (2026) argues that Achebe constructs *Things Fall Apart* as a counter-discourse that challenges colonial representations of Africa by privileging indigenous voices, cultural knowledge, and local systems of communication. Through this strategy, Achebe reasserts African agency while demonstrating that communication remains inseparable from identity, leadership, and social legitimacy.

Despite the growing body of study on both texts, existing research has largely developed along separate disciplinary and cultural trajectories. Studies of *Julius Caesar* primarily emphasize political rhetoric, republican governance, and ethical ambiguity, whereas research on *Things Fall Apart* concentrates on postcolonial identity, indigenous leadership, and cultural resistance. Although both texts investigate leadership and communication, comparative literary studies rarely examine these themes together through a unified analytical framework.

In addition, recent advances in ethical leadership and leadership communication research have had limited influence on comparative literary criticism. Contemporary leadership studies consistently identify communication, trust, ethical judgment, and moral influence as essential dimensions of effective leadership, yet these concepts have seldom been integrated into comparative analyses of Shakespeare and Achebe.

Accordingly, an important gap remains in understanding how leadership ethics and the power of communication operate across different literary traditions. A comparative examination of *Julius Caesar* and *Things Fall Apart* offers an opportunity to investigate how ethical leadership is constructed through rhetoric,

dialogue, silence, and moral decision-making within two distinct historical and cultural contexts. Such an approach not only contributes to comparative literary scholarship but also demonstrates the continuing relevance of literature for understanding leadership, communication, and ethical responsibility in contemporary society.

This study addresses that gap by comparatively examining how Shakespeare and Achebe represent leadership ethics and the power of communication. By integrating insights from literary criticism with recent scholarship on ethical leadership and communication, the study seeks to demonstrate that leadership is sustained not merely by authority or ambition but by moral responsibility, persuasive communication, and the ability to inspire trust within diverse communities.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Ethical Leadership Theory and Communication Theory, which together provide an interdisciplinary framework for examining leadership ethics and the power of communication in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. These theories offer an appropriate lens for analysing how ethical values and communication practices influence leadership, authority, and social outcomes.

Ethical Leadership Theory posits that effective leadership is based on moral principles such as integrity, fairness, responsibility, and accountability (Brown et al., 2005; Ciulla, 2004). Ethical leaders exercise influence not only through authority but also through ethical decision-making and responsible conduct. In this study, the theory provides a framework for evaluating the leadership practices of Julius Caesar, Brutus, Mark Antony, and Okonkwo, examining how their moral choices shape their legitimacy, effectiveness, and eventual success or failure.

Communication Theory explains how language, persuasion, rhetoric, dialogue, and silence shape leadership and public perception (Craig, 1999; Tourish, 2013). Leadership is inherently communicative because influence is exercised through discourse and interaction. In *Julius Caesar*, speeches and rhetoric determine political authority and public opinion, whereas in *Things Fall Apart*, proverbs, oral traditions, communal dialogue, and silence influence leadership, relationships, and social cohesion.

The integration of Ethical Leadership Theory and Communication Theory provides the conceptual foundation for this comparative study. Ethical Leadership Theory facilitates the analysis of moral responsibility and leadership behaviour, while Communication Theory explains how communicative practices construct authority, legitimacy, and influence. Together, these frameworks enable a comparative examination of leadership ethics and the power of communication in *Julius Caesar* and *Things Fall Apart*, demonstrating how ethical conduct and effective communication shape leadership outcomes across different cultural contexts.

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study is a qualitative comparative literary study that examines the representation of leadership ethics and the power of communication in William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Qualitative literary research is appropriate because it facilitates an in-depth interpretation of texts, enabling the exploration of themes, characters, dialogue, and narrative structures within their historical and cultural contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The comparative approach allows for the systematic examination of similarities and differences in the portrayal of leadership ethics and communicative practices across two distinct literary traditions (Pickering & Byrne, 2014).

3.2 Research Approach

The study adopts an interpretive textual analysis informed by close reading. This approach examines how language, characterization, dialogue, and narrative techniques construct meanings related to leadership, ethics, and communication (Barry, 2020). Through close textual analysis, the study investigates how ethical

leadership is represented, how communication shapes authority and public perception, and how moral decisions influence individual and societal outcomes in both texts.

3.3 Sources of Data

The study relies on both primary and secondary sources. The primary data consist of two literary texts:

1. Shakespeare, W. *Julius Caesar*.
2. Achebe, C. *Things Fall Apart*.

These texts were selected because they offer rich representations of leadership, ethical responsibility, political authority, and communication within different historical and cultural settings. Secondary data include peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, book chapters, and critical essays published in reputable academic sources. The literature focuses on: leadership ethics, leadership communication and rhetoric, Shakespearean criticism, Achebe and African literary studies, and comparative literary criticism.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through a comprehensive reading of the primary texts and relevant scholarly literature. Textual evidence, including speeches, dialogues, narrative descriptions, and character interactions related to leadership ethics and communication, was identified and systematically classified. The selected passages were organized into thematic categories, including: ethical leadership and moral responsibility; rhetoric, persuasion, and silence; communication and political or social influence; leadership decisions and their consequences; and authority, power, and community.

3.5 Data Analysis

The study employs thematic analysis to interpret the textual data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006, 2021), thematic analysis is an effective qualitative method for identifying, analysing, and interpreting recurring patterns within textual data. Following close reading, the selected passages were coded and grouped into themes related to leadership ethics and communication. These themes were then compared across *Julius Caesar* and *Things Fall Apart* to identify convergences and divergences in the representation of ethical leadership, persuasive communication, and leadership outcomes. The interpretation was informed by contemporary scholarship on leadership ethics and communication while remaining grounded in the historical and cultural contexts of the two literary works.

ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY

4.1 Leadership Ethics:

Ethics of leadership means the moral values and principles a leader should follow while guiding others. It is not just about having power but about using power in the right way. A leader with good ethics should be honest, fair, responsible, and show respect and compassion. A true leader thinks about long-term success, not only short-term achievements. In *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare shows that leadership ethics are fragile when mixed with pride and suspicion. Brutus is misled by Cassius and betrays his friend, believing that killing Caesar will save Rome. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe shows the conflict between personal pride and community values. Okonkwo becomes a leader through hard work and bravery, but he is too harsh and proud. He fails as a leader because he fears weakness and makes violent decisions. In both *Things Fall Apart* and *Julius Caesar*, leadership breaks down due to ethical and communication failures.

4.2. Leadership in *Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare

In *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare shows that good leadership depends on ethics, communication, and judgment. Leaders can succeed or fail depending on how they use these qualities. Brutus is an honest and moral leader who wants to do what is right for Rome and puts his country above personal feelings. However, Brutus is not completely successful because he is too strict with his morals and cannot connect with people emotionally. His

speeches are logical but not persuasive, so the public follows Antony instead. On the other hand, Mark Antony is a strong speaker who can easily influence people. His funeral speech shows how words can change public opinion and history. It shows that ethics alone are not enough; a leader must also communicate effectively and inspire others. Antony says in his speech during the funeral ceremony of Caesar,

> "I am no orator, as Brutus is;
> But, as you know me all, a plain blunt man."
>
> *Julius Caesar* (Act 3, Scene 2).

Though this is an irony spoken by Antony, the people here were influenced and convinced by his speech. Without blaming anyone, Antony is reaching the people of his country and receiving the utmost faith from them. However, Antony is not fully ethical because he uses emotional manipulation to stir anger and a desire for revenge. This proves that communication without morality can cause harm.

The repetition of words and phrases is another significant concern in communication. The most famous example is Antony's repeated description of Brutus and the conspirators as "honourable." He says,

> "For Brutus is an honourable man;
> So are they all, all honourable men."
>
> *Julius Caesar* (Act 3, Scene 2)

Julius Caesar is confident and ambitious, respected by many, but his pride and refusal to listen to advice lead to his downfall. This shows that leaders must be humble and open to others' opinions, rather than relying solely on power and ambition. Shakespeare demonstrates that true leadership is not just about authority or ambition. Leaders must be honest, make moral decisions, communicate well, and understand the people they lead. When a leader fails in ethics or communication, it can harm both themselves and their society.

Brutus has an ethical justification for Caesar's assassination, as he says,

> "Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more."
>
> (*Julius Caesar*, 3.2)

This is an excellent way to compare ethical intention with rhetorical effectiveness. Brutus attempts to justify political violence through republican ethics, whereas Antony uses rhetoric to reshape public understanding of that violence.

4.3. Leadership in *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe

Achebe shows that leadership depends on ethics, communication, and understanding people in his most remarkable novel, *Things Fall Apart*. Okonkwo's story demonstrates how failing in these areas can lead to disaster. He is brave, hardworking, and loyal to his culture, respected for his strength and achievements. However, Okonkwo is not a truly good leader. His bravery turns into stubbornness, and his strict rules become cruelty. He cannot speak gently or understand others' emotions. His anger and silence isolate him from his family and community. This shows that power without empathy and good communication often fails. Okonkwo's strength gradually becomes rigidity because his actions are strongly influenced by his fear of failure and weakness. Achebe explains that his "whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and of weakness" (Achebe, 1958). This fear significantly affects his leadership and personal relationships.

Okonkwo also struggles to adapt to change. He neither listens to others nor explains his thoughts clearly. People fear him instead of respecting him. This proves that leaders must listen and speak wisely to guide their people effectively. Okonkwo tries to lead through fear rather than understanding. His rigid thinking and silence cause problems for his family and the whole clan. Achebe teaches that leadership without moral judgment and communication can destroy both the leader and society. True leadership requires fairness, empathy, and balance between tradition and wisdom. Without these qualities, even a strong leader like Okonkwo can fail.

Okonkwo frequently uses anger and violence instead of patience and communication. His treatment of Ojiugo during the Week of Peace demonstrates his inability to control his emotions. Although the incident violates an important communal tradition, Okonkwo acts according to his anger. Ezeani, the priest of the earth goddess, therefore tells him, "You have committed a great evil" (Achebe, 1958). This incident shows that Okonkwo's authority does not always reflect ethical leadership. He places personal anger above the moral principles of his community. His treatment of Ikemefuna further demonstrates his failure of moral judgment. Although Ikemefuna considers Okonkwo a father figure, Okonkwo participates in his killing because he fears being considered weak. Achebe emphasizes this motivation directly: "He was afraid of being thought weak" (Achebe, 1958). His decision reveals how his rigid understanding of masculinity prevents him from acting with compassion and independent moral judgment.

Okonkwo's poor communication also damages his relationship with his son, Nwoye. Instead of understanding Nwoye's emotional needs, he tries to force him to become a strong and aggressive man. Achebe explains that Okonkwo "wanted Nwoye to grow into a tough young man" (Achebe, 1958). His harsh approach creates emotional distance between father and son, and Nwoye eventually becomes attracted to Christianity. Thus, Okonkwo's inability to communicate with empathy contributes to the breakdown of his family.

Therefore, Achebe presents Okonkwo as a powerful but flawed leader. His courage, determination, and commitment to tradition are important strengths, but his anger, fear, rigidity, poor communication, and inability to adapt ultimately undermine his authority. His tragedy demonstrates that effective leadership requires more than physical strength. It requires ethical judgment, empathy, effective communication, emotional control, and the ability to understand and respond wisely to social change.

4.4. The Power of Communication in both texts:

Communication plays a vital role in leadership in both *Julius Caesar* and *Things Fall Apart*. How leaders speak, or remain silent, affects not only their success but also the fate of their people. In *Julius Caesar*, speeches and words are powerful tools. Brutus speaks after Caesar's death with honesty and logic, but his words do not connect emotionally with the people. As a result, the crowd supports Antony. This shows that even truthful messages can fail if a leader cannot communicate effectively. Antony, on the other hand, uses emotional and persuasive language. His funeral speech mixes anger and change, shaping Rome's destiny, showing that communication without ethics can become dangerous. Caesar himself fails to communicate with those around him; his refusal to listen to advice leads to his downfall.

In *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo struggles with communication. He rarely explains his thoughts clearly or listens to others. His harsh words and silence make people fear him rather than respect him. Because he cannot communicate effectively, he fails to guide his family and community. His pride and inability to adapt prevent him from solving problems or uniting his people. Achebe teaches that communication is essential for leadership, and a leader who cannot speak wisely or listen carefully can harm both himself and society.

In both texts, Shakespeare and Achebe show that communication is a powerful tool in leadership. Words can inspire, unite, or destroy. Leaders who fail to communicate well or who use communication without morality risk losing power and peace. Effective communication, combined with ethical leadership, is essential for guiding people and maintaining harmony in society.

4.5 Ethics and Social Consequences in *Julius Caesar* and *Things Fall Apart*:

Ethics is very important in leadership. Both *Julius Caesar* and *Things Fall Apart* show that when leaders ignore ethics, it can harm not only themselves but also the whole society. In *Julius Caesar*, Brutus tries to act morally by killing Caesar to protect the Republic. But his strict moral thinking is too idealistic. He does not consider people's feelings or the consequences of his actions. This leads to confusion, war, and the collapse of order in Rome. Antony, though a good speaker, manipulates the crowd for revenge. His lack of ethical leadership causes violence and chaos. Caesar's pride and refusal to listen also show unethical leadership. His ambition sets his own power above the good of the people, which leads to his death and instability in Rome. Social consequences are that when leaders fail to act ethically, society suffers. In Rome, poor moral judgment and misuse of communication cause conflict, rebellion, and the loss of public trust.

In the novel *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo values strength and tradition but acts harshly and selfishly. He ignores the feelings of his family and community and fails to guide them responsibly. His pride, anger, and silence show a lack of ethical leadership. He cannot adapt to change or resolve conflicts peacefully. Social Consequences like Okonkwo's unethical leadership cause fear, division, and eventually the collapse of his social and family life. His community also faces challenges because he cannot lead with understanding and justice. In both texts, Shakespeare and Achebe show that ethics are essential in leadership. When leaders act selfishly, ignore moral responsibilities, or misuse power, society suffers. A leader must balance personal ambition with moral responsibility to prevent harm to themselves and their community. Ethical leadership ensures peace, unity, and stability in society.

DISCUSSION

This study comparatively examines leadership, ethics, and communication in William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Although the texts emerge from different historical and cultural contexts, both portray leadership as a complex relationship between authority, moral judgment, and communication. The findings demonstrate that leadership becomes unstable when personal values, social responsibilities, and communicative practices fall out of balance.

5.1. Leadership Ethics

Both texts present leadership as a moral responsibility rather than merely a position of authority. In *Julius Caesar*, Brutus's decision to participate in Caesar's assassination reflects his commitment to Rome, but his idealistic judgment fails to anticipate its political and human consequences. Caesar, meanwhile, illustrates how excessive confidence and ambition can weaken moral judgment. Similarly, Okonkwo's leadership in *Things Fall Apart* is undermined by his rigid understanding of strength and masculinity. His fear of weakness repeatedly leads him to decisions that conflict with compassion and communal harmony. Thus, both texts associate ethical leadership with judgment, self-control, responsibility, and awareness of consequences.

5.2. Communication and Leadership

Communication functions differently but equally significantly in both works. In *Julius Caesar*, Brutus relies primarily on rational justification, whereas Antony employs repetition, irony, emotional appeal, and strategic persuasion to influence the Roman crowd. The contrast demonstrates that rhetorical effectiveness can substantially alter public perception. In *Things Fall Apart*, communication is embedded in proverbs, storytelling, communal dialogue, and cultural traditions. Okonkwo's aggressive and inflexible manner contrasts with characters such as Obierika, whose reflective communication allows greater space for dialogue. The findings therefore suggest that leadership depends not only on the ability to speak but also on listening, contextual awareness, and appropriate forms of expression.

5.3. Comparative Perspective

The comparison reveals both convergence and difference. Shakespeare emphasizes political rhetoric and public persuasion, while Achebe foregrounds communal discourse and culturally grounded communication. Despite these differences, both texts depict leadership crises emerging when authority becomes disconnected from ethical judgment and effective communication. Their similarities therefore support a cross-cultural understanding of leadership, while their differences demonstrate that leadership practices are shaped by specific cultural and historical contexts.

5.4. Broader Implications

The study suggests that literary representations of leadership can illuminate the relationship between power, ethics, and communication across cultures. *Julius Caesar* demonstrates the political consequences of persuasive rhetoric and contested moral judgment, while *Things Fall Apart* reveals how rigid authority and disrupted cultural communication can contribute to individual and communal breakdown. Together, the texts suggest that leadership requires not simply power or status, but responsible judgment and culturally responsive communication.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* offer enduring insights into the connection between leadership ethics and the power of communication. Although the two works emerge from distinct historical, political, and cultural contexts, both portray leadership as a moral responsibility that extends beyond the exercise of authority. Through the experiences of characters such as Julius Caesar, Brutus, Mark Antony, and Okonkwo, the texts illustrate how ethical judgment, persuasive communication, and responsible decision-making shape the legitimacy and effectiveness of leadership. The comparative analysis exposes that leadership achievement depends not only on power or influence but also on integrity, accountability, empathy, and the ability to communicate effectively. Conversely, ethical failures, ineffective communication, personal ambition, rigid beliefs, and the misuse or absence of dialogue contribute to conflict, social instability, and the decline of both leaders and their communities. These findings underscore that communication is not simply a leadership skill but a powerful instrument for building trust, resolving conflict, and promoting social cohesion. Ultimately, Shakespeare and Achebe present leadership as a practice grounded in ethical values and meaningful communication. Their works highlight the universal relevance of integrity, moral responsibility, and constructive dialogue in sustaining effective leadership across different societies. By bringing these texts into a comparative framework, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of leadership ethics and the power of communication, demonstrating their continuing significance in literary scholarship and contemporary leadership discourse.

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