

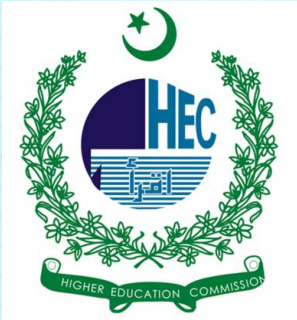
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**Ambition, Choice and Damnation: A Comparative Study of  
Hamlet and Doctor Faustus**



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**Abstract**

This study compares William Shakespeare Hamlet and Christopher Marlow's Doctor Faustus to examine how ambition, personal choice, and moral consequence shape tragic heroism. Both protagonists are intellectually driven by desires that exceed conventional limits \_Hamlet by the pursuit of justice and truth, Faustus by the pursuit of knowledge and power The study explores how both characters struggle with fate, free will, and moral responsibility, revealing the complex inner battles that define their journeys their choices reveal a tension between human agency and moral accountability. Hamlet hesitation and Faustus deliberate pact with the devil lead them toward self-destruction, but the nature of their damnation differs. One its psychological and political, the other spiritual and eternal. Through close textual analysis this research shows how these tragedies reflect timeless human questions about choice, consequence, and the conflict between desire and duty, making them enduring works that still speak to modern readers. The comparison shows that tragedy arises not only from external forces but from the internal conflict produced by unchecked ambition and the misuse of choice. Ultimately, both plays present damnation as the inevitable outcome of rejecting ethical boundaries, offering a critique of Renaissance humanism's limits.

**Keywords:** Tragic heroism, Free will, Ambition, Damnation, Comparative literature, Hamlet, Dr. Faustus.

**Introduction**

Many of the literary works of the Renaissance analyze the influence of human ambitions, decisions, and behaviors on one's life and morals. The most significant sad stories of the English Renaissance include the plays such as William Shakespeare's Hamlet and Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus.

These texts have several characters, whose high aspirations led them to failure. Although they come from different traditions, both pieces of work consider the same theme, which concerns the conflict between the needs of humans and ethics. The eternal popularity of these plays proves the idea that unrestricted ambition and immoral decisions could result in catastrophe rather than success.

Specifically, the play Hamlet discusses many themes that concern human ambitions and morality. For instance, the protagonist faces various issues related to revenge, ethics, and existential dilemmas. Moreover, his hesitation is based not only on uncertainty but also on the analysis of morality, his responsibility, and possible consequences of every decision. Recent research suggests that one can comprehend Hamlet's decisions and behavior from the viewpoint of his approach to decision-making, especially in cases of doubt and uncertainty (Leitzel, 2023). Thus, the internal moral conflicts contribute greatly to his tragic failure. Marlowe's Doctor Faustus looks at the desire for knowledge and success that goes past what is morally and religiously acceptable. Faustus turns away from regular knowledge to seek unlimited power and control over magic, showing how too much ambition can lead to ruin. Recent studies suggest that Faustus shift from feeling confident to feeling hopeless shows the effect of losing moral values and having excessive ambitions (Krishna, 2023).

Therefore, The study looks at how ambition, personal choices, and consequences affect the tragic heroism in Hamlet and Doctor Faustus. This study looks at protagonist's reason for their actions, the choices they made, and how they fall. This comparison aims to show that tragedy comes not just from outside problems but also from uncontrolled ambition and bad choices.

## **1.2 Background of the Study**

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## **Over view of Elizabethan drama**

The Elizabethan era, known as the great time for English theater, a lot of plays being created, especially tragedies. These plays showed the new ideas and changes happening in culture and politics during the Renaissance. From the late 1500s to the early 1600s, during Queen Elizabeth I's rule (1558–1603), this time saw big changes that influenced English literature and theater for many years (Hopkins, 2021). During this time, English plays were greatly shaped by the ideas of the Renaissance. These ideas focused on the importance of personal experiences, the power of human thinking, and the challenges of making moral decisions (Cartwright, 2022). Elizabethan drama developed from earlier morality plays and short performances from the medieval times (Smith, 2023). It combined ideas from ancient Greek and Roman tragedies, especially those by Seneca, with modern themes and everyday language (Neill, 2020). Theatres like The Globe and The Rose became very important for culture, and writers like William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe became key figures in this new style of drama (Greenblatt, 2012). Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593) was an important person in early English theater. He came before Shakespeare and helped make dramatic poetry and the idea of a complicated tragic hero more popular (Wilson, 2024).

## **The Concept of the Tragic Hero in Classical and Renaissance Literature**

The concept of a tragic hero has evolved significantly over the years, yet remains one of the most compelling and enduring aspects of tragic stories (Bushnell, 2019). The tragic hero originated in ancient Greek plays and was refined in Renaissance literature. This figure illustrates the intense conflict between an individual's decisions and larger forces such as fate, God's will, or society's laws (Felski, 2023). This character tends to experience a hard time that leaves the audience sympathizing with them and frightened (Hall, 2020).

This story should not just entertain but also leave people considering moral and profound thoughts (Williams, J., & Thompson, P, 2025).

### **The Classical Tragic Hero: Foundations in Greek Literature**

The concept of a tragic hero originated in ancient Greek drama, particularly from the work of authors such as Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Aristotle's *Poetics*, which is a text in which he discusses art, particularly poetry and drama, is from about 350 BC. He discusses why stories and plays are good, including topics such as plot, character, and emotion (Hall, 2020). In 335 BCE, the first definite definition of tragedy and the tragic hero was presented. A tragic hero, according to Aristotle, is someone significant who is neither entirely good nor entirely bad. They have an error or flaw, or *hamartia*, which makes them fail or suffer. This fall, while it is negative, isn't merely harmful; it allows strong emotions such as sadness and fear for the audience (Felski, 2023). Butcher, 1997 *Sophocles' Oedipus Rex* is usually the one referred to as the quintessential tragic hero. Oedipus is a decent king who wishes to rescue Thebes from an illness. Through his quest for answers, he discovers something incredible: he inadvertently killed his father and married his mother. Oedipus's downfall stems from both his ignorance and his adamant need to know the truth. His suffering evokes intense sorrow and dread, fulfilling Aristotle's concept of *catharsis* (Budelmann, 2021). In Greek tragedies, the protagonist typically grapples with his fate and the desires of the gods. The heroes' actions count and tend to have an impact on the nation, city, or universe. Their narratives caution us against being haughty, suffering punishment from the gods, and the boundaries of what we can understand. Fate is not to be evaded, and the hero is predestined for failure, but nonetheless, it does feel very personal and painful (Hardwick, 2023).

**The Renaissance Tragic Hero: Humanism and Individualism**

The Renaissance was an era in which individuals reverted to traditional notions, emphasizing human experience, thinking for oneself, and enjoying personal liberty. The protagonist of this era demonstrates the dilemma of a Renaissance individual, torn between believing in religion and employing reason, being duty-bound yet desiring what they want, and deciding whether or not to act (Hopkins, 2022). You can observe this transformation in the tragic hero of Renaissance English playwrights such as William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe. The Renaissance tragic hero is more concerned about his emotions and thoughts than the heroes of the past. Shakespeare's Hamlet is a prince belonging to a noble family. His biggest issue isn't that he acts too rashly or is too arrogant, but rather he overthinks and procrastinates when action is required. Hamlet's questioning of death, life, and right and wrong reflect the Renaissance fascination with how humans think and feel. His monologues allow the audience to observe the inner turmoil that defines his narrative (Smith, 2023).

Unlike Oedipus, who takes strong action without knowing the full truth, Hamlet hesitates to act because he thinks too much. This shows a more modern idea of inner struggle (Swarbrick, 2025). In contrast, Marlowe's Doctor Faustus shows a tragic hero from the Renaissance who represents the time's excessive ambition. Faustus, being an educated man, decides to sell his soul to Lucifer for twenty-four years of never-ending knowledge and power. His biggest weakness is being too ambitious and proud, something that most Renaissance people did, hence the Renaissance itself, or "the rebirth" in Italian, meaning the revival of interest in learning and what humans could accomplish (Hill, 2024). Unlike typical heroes, Faustus is able to repent but refuses to seek forgiveness until it is too late. His fall is concerning his soul and ethics, showing the ill effect of being too proud of your intellect (Wilson, 2024).

### **Key Features of the Renaissance Tragic Hero**

Several characteristics define the tragic hero in Renaissance literature:

- I. **Noble Birth and High Status:** Both classical and Renaissance tragic heroes come from noble or influential backgrounds. Their fall is made more tragic because of the height from which they fall.
- II. **Tragic Flaw (Hamartia):** The flaw is often internal—excessive ambition (Faustus), procrastination (Hamlet), jealousy (Othello), or unchecked ambition (Macbeth). This flaw is not evil in itself but leads to poor decisions.
- III. **Moral Ambiguity:** Unlike classical heroes who often suffer due to fate or the gods, Renaissance tragic heroes bear more responsibility for their downfall. Their choices and inner conflicts play a central role.
- IV. **Internal Conflict:** The Renaissance hero is marked by psychological complexity. Hamlet's soliloquies, Macbeth's visions, and Faustus's inner debates reflect this inward turn.
- V. **Catharsis and Audience Engagement:** The downfall of the hero still evokes pity and fear. The audience sympathizes with the hero, even as they witness his fall from grace.
- VI. **Emphasis on Free Will:** While divine forces may still play a role, Renaissance tragic heroes operate more within the realm of free will. Their downfall is often a result of personal choices rather than an inevitable fate.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

Although Hamlet and Doctor Faustus are widely studied as tragedies, but there is limited comparison has been made on how ambition, personal choices, and moral responsibility all lead to the protagonists down fall. Both Hamlet and Faustus have made certain choices while pursuing their own desires beyond ethical or social boundaries, which may contradict moral and social norms. Therefore, the consequences of their choices turns out to be

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drastically different \_one leading to psychological and political destruction, the other one to spiritual condemnation. The study aims to explore how unchecked ambition and individual decisions shape tragic heroism and damnation in both plays. Moreover, It will analyze the clash between human choices, moral obligation, and the philosophy of humanism.

## **1.4 Research Objectives**

1. To examine the role of ambition in shaping the tragic journeys of Hamlet and Dr. Faustus.
2. To analyze how personal choices and free will contribute to the downfall of the protagonists in both plays.
3. To compare the forms of damnation and moral consequences in Hamlet and Doctor Faustus.

## **1.5 Research Questions**

1. How does ambition shape the tragic journeys of Hamlet and Doctor Faustus?
2. How do personal choices and free will contribute to the downfall of the protagonists in Hamlet and Doctor Faustus?
3. How do the forms of damnation and moral consequences differ in Hamlet and Doctor Faustus?

## **1.6 Novelty of work**

This study offers a new insight into Hamlet and Doctor Faustus by examining their themes of tragedy in a more holistic approach. Instead of comparing each tragedy separately, this research allows us to see how they are alike and different regarding Renaissance ideas, especially personal choices, goals, and ethical repercussions. Both characters demonstrate what it is like to be a Renaissance tragic hero, but both have different struggles. Hamlet grapples with uncertainty and doubt in life, while Faustus has an insatiable appetite for knowledge and power. These contrasts show how individuals reacted differently to the shifts in ideas and culture of the time. This research also

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presents new concepts by examining the inner struggle of the heroes through their speeches. It explains how introspection, emotional issues, and decision-making result in their failures. Hamlet overthinks and questions everything, and Faustus foolishly pursues his aspirations and becomes despondent. Both are faced with the issues of free will, fate, and right or wrong. It presents a more detailed examination of the way Shakespeare and Marlowe began to shift the concept of the tragic hero away from Aristotle's conventional conceptions. Aristotle's concept of tragedy revolves around a hero's fall due to a personal error or flaw. This study provides a fresh perspective on both tragedies by situating them in the larger cultural and intellectual context of early modern England. This research enhances scholarly discourse by integrating various disciplines such as literature, philosophy, and history in an integrated manner.

### **1.7 Significance of the Study**

This comparative analysis of the tragic heroes in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* holds significant value in understanding the development of tragedy in early modern English literature. By examining Hamlet and Dr. Faustus side by side, the study provides deeper insight into the moral, philosophical, and psychological dimensions of the Renaissance tragic hero. Both characters represent the human struggle with ambition, doubt, knowledge, and fate, yet they embody these struggles in uniquely different ways. Exploring their journeys helps to highlight the evolution of tragic form and the varying interpretations of human agency and downfall within Elizabethan drama.

Furthermore, the study enriches literary scholarship by offering a nuanced view of how Shakespeare and Marlowe, two of the most influential dramatists of the time, constructed tragic narratives to reflect the intellectual and spiritual concerns of their age. It also contributes to the ongoing

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discourse on how literature mirrors the human condition, offering timeless questions about morality, power, and the consequences of choice. For students and scholars of literature, this analysis not only enhances the understanding of character development and thematic depth but also provides a meaningful framework for exploring the legacy and relevance of classical tragedy in contemporary times

## **1.8 Literature Review**

The tragic characters Hamlet and Faustus have been the cause of much debate among scholars. Individuals study them both individually and in conjunction with one another because they are prime examples of the Renaissance tragic heroes. Most of the research is focused on the Shakespearean and Marlowe tragic heroes Hamlet and Doctor Faustus. They investigate extensively their violent thoughts, painful decisions, and troubling ethical issues. These two characters are excellent representatives of Renaissance tragedy as they debate heavy personal matters and outcomes of their decisions. In Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark is frustrated because he has to avenge his father, and he is unsure whether anything is right or wrong.

Doctor Faustus is a student who is never content with anything. He makes a choice to sell his soul to the devil so that he will possess endless power and knowledge. While they share different histories and narratives, both of these protagonists are the best of the Renaissance individual. Both are introspective, driven, and ultimately they are brought low by their own weaknesses. What this chapter will look at is what other writers have had to say in an effort to draw parallels between the tragic heroism of Doctor Faustus and Hamlet. It explores how both of these characters are a part of the framework of an Aristotelian tragedy. This involves their flaws, reversals in their fate, revelations of reality, and catharsis of emotions the reader feels. Hamlet's main problem is that he thinks too much and cannot act. This keeps his plan

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for revenge at a standstill and ultimately leads to his death. The tragic hero is a character figure that has survived since ancient civilization to the Renaissance and even in current times.

The character is symbolic of important themes in society, philosophy, and ethics. In Renaissance drama, especially in the works of William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe, the tragic hero evolves significantly, portraying the humanist ideas of the period. This chapter offers an overview of the research relevant to the comparison of Shakespeare's Hamlet and Marlowe's Doctor Faustus. It takes into account the evolution of the concept of the tragic hero, the influence of classical tragedy, Renaissance humanism, and various readings of the two protagonists. The chapter makes use of key concepts of renowned literature scholars to enable us to perceive Hamlet and Faustus as characters shaped by their culture and time as tragic figures. It also examines how the path of each character—Hamlet's inaction and Faustus's indiscriminate pursuit of knowledge forbidden to man—is illuminating on significant questions concerning human existence. Both plays raise the theme of destiny versus having a choice.

In "Hamlet," the namesake cannot move forward because things happen that are outside of his control. In "Faustus," the central character can return to a more favorable course of action, but he makes poor decisions that result in his demise. This research contrasts the two main figures and illustrates that both experience comparable issues, such as being weak, having to endure tough circumstances, and coping with death, which are all pieces of their tragic narratives. Both their stories are timeless and still resonate with people today who face the same life and moral issues. This study explores how Hamlet would rather brood and puzzle over things and how Faustus really wants to be a success. It attempts to demonstrate the different aspects of

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tragedy and how Shakespeare and Marlowe's techniques of developing tragic heroes are still relevant today.

The Renaissance also created a new interest in old philosophy and stressed the value of personal skills and being able to make personal choices. According to Greenblatt (2012), the tragic hero in Renaissance drama illustrates the tension between old Christian morals and new concepts of human significance. Doctor Faustus's extreme desire and Hamlet's indecisiveness in this context are not merely individual issues. They also exhibit larger concerns regarding ideas and existence. Hopkins, L (2021) states that the failure of Faustus illustrates the dangers of working too hard during the Renaissance, where human ambition for knowledge and accomplishment is contrary to the power of God. Faustus's refusal to repent even when he had numerous opportunities makes him a representative of excessive arrogance about his intelligence. Hamlet, however, displays a different kind of humanism based on questioning, self-questioning, and pondering the nature of right and wrong. His primary issue is not desiring success but overthinking and being unable to cope with ethical dilemmas (Bate, 2024).

Marlowe's Doctor Faustus is usually regarded as a significant play concerning an individual from the Renaissance who attempts to transcend human limits to accumulate all knowledge and power (Wilson, 2024). Faustus symbolizes the shift from the medieval concept of humility before God to the Renaissance belief in the value of human capability and ambition to study and accomplish things. Massai, S., & Munro, L. (2021) states that Faustus demonstrates a departure from the compliant Christian perception of the world. This is a departure into a new era where individuals begin to question God's authority. Bate, (2024) supports this concept by illustrating that Faustus's insatiable desire to know everything—about the world, politics, and religious things—is a means of combating religious constraint and the limits

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of conventional schooling. This is relevant to the tragic tale of the play. Despite numerous opportunities for him to repent, such as guidance from the Good Angel and the Old Man, Faustus continues with his bargain with Lucifer. His actions are not necessitated by need or compulsion, but by his own deliberate choices over time. This puts him as an Aristotle-style tragic hero who is brought down by his pride and exaggeration of his own capabilities. Thus, Faustus symbolizes the conflict of men who desire to set themselves up but are constrained by religious principles. His final wish, "I'll burn my books." not only betrays his remorse but also the melancholy realization that human wisdom and might have their limits in facing deeper, metaphysical truths.

Marlowe's Doctor Faustus is written in a manner that makes the play sound extremely dramatic and significant. Scholars pointed out that Marlowe's mastery of blank verse enhances the dramatic nature of the journey of the main character. His speech is usually too dramatic and laced with grandiose words, much like Faustus's grandiose image of himself and his grand ambitions (Greenblatt, 2012). This is particularly evident in the most crucial sections of the play, where the fine words become fragmented and desperate shouts for salvation. The final speech, in which Faustus confronts the reality of eternal damnation, is perhaps one of the most beautifully composed and profoundly moving passages in Renaissance drama (Budelmann, 2021). Unlike Marlowe's ambitious character Faustus, Shakespeare's Hamlet is a tragic hero who is more focused on his inner thoughts, self-reflection, and uncertainty about life. Faustus makes quick and bold decisions, while Hamlet is a deep thinker who feels stuck because of what he knows, his sense of duty, and his fear of what might happen forever. Amina, (2025) refers to Hamlet as a unique type of modern-day tragic hero. His internal conflicts are what generate the true drama within the novel. His hesitation to exact revenge isn't an error; it indicates that he's reflecting deeply on life, making his own issues an even

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greater reflection of what it is to be human. Hamlet's internal struggle is revealed clearly in his monologues to himself, which permitted the audience to observe how his emotions and ideas shift. His famous line, "To be, or not to be," is more than a clever query; it's an introspective gaze at suffering, death, and the ethical impact of acting or not acting. Fatima, I., & Shafiq, F. (2024) writes that Hamlet embodies the beginning of the contemporary individual.

This implies that an individual is not only characterized by their actions in society or courage, but by their self-knowledge, doubt, and ongoing pursuit of what is right and wrong. Unlike normal heroes, Hamlet does not discover his identity in his position or what he has accomplished. Rather, he identifies himself by his capacity for reflection and questioning. His declaration, "Something is wrong in Denmark," is not only indicative of the issues within Elsinore's government but also about the ill conduct and corruption that permeate the court and lead him to question his perception of justice (Bistol, 2023). Further, thought and action. While Faustus's tale unfolds directly in a line of tragedy, Hamlet's path is full of turns, postponements, feigning madness, and spurts of violent outbreaks. This fragmented path mirrors Hamlet's own fractured emotions and ideas. He is a man torn between his beliefs and who he is (Hall, 2020).

Additionally, the significance of destiny and fate in Hamlet's life is uncertain and complex. At times he speaks of a higher power controlling our destiny—"There's a higher force that shapes our destinies"—but also struggles to grasp what free will and personal responsibility are all about. His decision to act in the second half of the play is not about resolving his ethical dilemma; it's about realizing that death and mystery are inescapable. In contrast to Faustus, Hamlet presents the diversity of Renaissance tragedy. In this kind of tale, heroism is not only to act but also to think deeply about one's self. An individual's failure occurs not only because he or she disobeyed God, but also

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because he or she must bear the weight of knowing what is right and wrong and what life is all about (Massai, S., & Munro, L. (Eds., 2021).Shakespeare in conjunction from multiple academic disciplines, and none do it simultaneously. This study hopes to address those deficits by comparing Hamlet and Doctor Faustus side by side, examining how both characters relate to the concepts, culture, and literature of the Renaissance era (Hall, 2020) . This research contrasts the religious and psychological perspectives in Marlowe's and Shakespeare's dramas to demonstrate how they constructed tragic heroes. Both heroes struggle with the same questions of the Renaissance—such as knowledge, right and wrong, freedom, and the issues concerning faith—but they approach them differently. By doing this, the research connects important areas that were previously separated and helps to better understand the sad style of writing during a time when English literature changed a lot.

## **1.9 Research Methodology**

Research methodology is the scientific way in which a study is planned, how data is gathered, processed, and interpreted. It is the backbone of academic research, so that studies are done carefully and methodically to arrive at dependable and accurate results. In literary studies, qualitative approaches provide significant means of interpreting the meanings of texts, how characters evolve, and the underlying themes (Girven, 2008). The qualitative research method is widely employed in literary studies due to its interpretative and exploratory nature. It allows for a deep engagement with texts, enabling scholars to uncover multiple layers of meaning in literary works, particularly in relation to themes, characters, symbols, and structures. In this study, qualitative research is particularly appropriate because it enables an analytical reading of tragic characters within the philosophical and ideological framework of the Renaissance. This study adopts two interrelated methods within qualitative research: Comparative Literary Analysis and Textual Analysis.

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Comparative literary analysis is the central method of this research. Textual analysis is used to examine specific speeches, dialogues, and narrative structures within both plays. This research relies on secondary data sources to build a comprehensive understanding of the selected texts and their critical reception. The primary data consists of the original literary texts:

- *Doctor Faustus* by Christopher Marlowe (1604 version)
- *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare (1603 First Quarto)

These texts form the foundation of the comparative analysis. They are studied intensively to extract thematic concerns, rhetorical strategies, and character developments that are central to the study. The narrative analysis approach is employed to dissect the dramatic structure and character arcs within each play. Central to this is Aristotle's *Poetics* (c. 335 BCE), which outlines the essential components of tragedy: *hamartia* (tragic flaw), *Peripeteia* (reversal of fortune), *Anagnorisis* (recognition), and *catharsis* (emotional purification).

Furthermore, This research is based entirely on literary texts and published secondary sources, there are no human subjects involved, and therefore no ethical concerns related to fieldwork or interviews. Nevertheless, academic ethics are maintained through:

- Proper citation and referencing of all primary and secondary sources.
- Avoidance of plagiarism and misrepresentation of scholars' arguments.
- Transparency in the analytical process to ensure reliability and scholarly integrity.

## **1.10 Theoretical Framework**

### **Narrative Analysis Using Aristotelian Framework**

The narrative analysis approach is employed to dissect the dramatic structure and characteristics within each play. Central to this is Aristotle's *Poetics* (c. 335 BCE), which outlines the essential components of tragedy: *hamartia* (tragic

flaw), *peripeteia* (reversal of fortune), *anagnorisis* (recognition), and *catharsis* (emotional purification).

**1.11 Findings and analysis**

**Table 1: Findings related to Ambition**

**(Objective 1: To examine the role of ambition in shaping the tragic journeys of Hamlet and Dr. Faustus.)**

<b>Character</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Original Text / Quote (Act/Scene)</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
<b>Hamlet</b>	Ambition Justice	"The time is out of joint: O Hamlet's ambition is for cursed spite, That ever I was directed born to set it right!" (Act 1, Scene 5)	toward restoring justice and moral order.
<b>Hamlet</b>	Pursuit of Truth	"The play's the thing wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King." (Act 2, Scene 2)	Hamlet's ambition to uncover the truth drives his actions.
<b>Hamlet</b>	Determination for Revenge	"O, from this time forth, My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!" (Act 4, Scene 4)	Hamlet's ambition for revenge intensifies and accelerates the tragic journey.
<b>Dr. Faustus</b>	Desire for Knowledge	"A sound magician is a mighty god." (Scene 1)	Faustus's ambition for unlimited knowledge exceeds human limits.
<b>Dr. Faustus</b>	Desire for Power	"All things that move between the quiet poles Shall be at my command." (Scene 1)	Excessive ambition motivates the pursuit of absolute power.

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Character	Theme	Original Text / Quote (Act/Scene)	Interpretation
<b>Dr. Faustus</b>	Boundless Ambition	"Had I as many souls as there be stars, I'd give them all for Mephistophilis." (Scene 3)	Ambition blinds Faustus to moral and spiritual consequences.

**Table 2: Findings Related to Personal Choice and Free Will**

**(Objective 2: To analyze how personal choices and free will contribute to the downfall of the protagonists in both plays.)**

Character	Theme	Original Text / Quote (Act/Scene)	Interpretation
<b>Hamlet</b>	Moral Choice	"Thus conscience does make cowards of us all." (Act 3, Scene 1)	Excessive reflection prevents decisive action.
<b>Hamlet</b>	Delayed Revenge	"Now might I do it pat, now he is praying." (Act 3, Scene 3)	Hamlet consciously postpones revenge, contributing to his downfall.
<b>Hamlet</b>	Acceptance of Choice	"There's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow." (Act 5, Scene 2)	Hamlet ultimately accepts responsibility for his decisions.
<b>Dr. Faustus</b>	Free Will	"This night I'll conjure, though I die therefore." (Scene 1)	Faustus knowingly chooses a dangerous path.

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Character	Theme	Original Text / Quote (Act/Scene)	Interpretation
<b>Dr. Faustus</b>	Rejection of Repentance	"My heart's so hardened I cannot repent." (Scene 13)	Misuse of free will prevents redemption.
<b>Dr. Faustus</b>	Self-Realization	"Faustus hath lost both Germany and the world." (Scene 13)	His downfall results from deliberate choices rather than fate.

**Table 3: Findings Related to Damnation and Moral Consequences**

**(Objective 3: To compare the forms of damnation and moral consequences in *Hamlet* and *Doctor Faustus*.)**

Character	Theme	Original Text / Quote (Act/Scene)	Interpretation
<b>Hamlet</b>	Psychological Damnation	"To be, or not to be: Hamlet's inner conflict that is the question." (Act 3, Scene 1)	represents psychological suffering and torment.
<b>Hamlet</b>	Moral Consequences	"I am justly kill'd with mine own treachery." (Act 5, Scene 2)	The revenge cycle leads to widespread destruction and guilt.
<b>Hamlet</b>	Political Damnation	"The rest is silence." (Act 5, Scene 2)	Hamlet's death symbolizes the collapse of personal and political order.
<b>Dr. Faustus</b>	Spiritual Damnation	"My God, my God, look not so fierce on me!" (Scene 13)	Faustus experiences fear and spiritual condemnation.

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Character	Theme	Original Text / Quote (Act/Scene)	Interpretation
Dr. Faustus	Realization Error	of "I'll burn my books!" (Scene 13)	He realizes his mistakes when redemption is no longer possible.
Dr. Faustus	Eternal Punishment	"Ugly hell, gape not! Faustus Come not, Lucifer!" (Scene 13)	suffers eternal consequences for his moral transgression.

## 1.12 Discussion

The present study examined the themes of ambition, personal choice, and damnation in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. The findings reveal that ambition serves as the primary force initiating the tragic journeys of both protagonists. The drive for ambition becomes a critical constraint that triggers a series of disastrous events for both characters. "The time is out of joint: O cursed spite, That ever I was born to set it right!" is the quote that clearly shows Hamlet's need to restore the order in the society. Namely, his determination to expose Claudius through "The play's the thing wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King" indicates that his ambition is associated with justice. On the other hand, Faustus' ambition involves gaining more power and knowledge, as indicated in such phrases as "A sound magician is a powerful god" and "All things that move between the quiet poles shall be at my command." Hence, one can see that Faustus attempts to overcome the limitations of a mortal through absolute control. Thus, the findings reveal that despite the similarities in their aspirations, those are different in nature for each hero – Hamlet seeks justice, while Faustus aims to gain control. However, regardless of their motivations, aspiration becomes the main driver behind. Thus, one should note that character choices and the

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freedom to make them play crucial roles in making them face their downfall. Hamlet continues to procrastinate as he cannot clearly distinguish between right and wrong deeds. The phrase used by the author, "Thus conscience does make cowards of us all" emphasizes that too much thinking makes it difficult to take bold steps. At the same time, when the opportunity to murder Claudius comes, he takes it into consideration and concludes that, "Now might I do it pat, now he is praying." It becomes clear that both decisions postpone the action and end up with tragic consequences. It is worth saying that the similar situation occurs when Faustus starts making plans that lead him to doom after he stated, "This night I'll conjure, though I die therefore." Though there are many opportunities for him to alter the decision, he does not and continues his actions saying, "My heart's so hardened I cannot repent." It can be seen, Hamlet and Faustus have enough chances to make decisions that result in their demise.

From the findings, it can be concluded that Hamlet and Faustus have different forms of punishments and moral dilemmas in life. Hamlet's troubles arise primarily due to psychological reasons and politics. Hamlet's famous saying, "To be, or not to be: that is the question" contains very strong emotional connotations of uncertainty and anxiety about his existence. As a result, the consequences of revenge turn out to destroy the entire royal family and destabilize the whole state. Moreover, his last words "The rest is silence," symbolize the defeat in the psychological and political struggle. On the contrary, Faustus is tormented by spiritual and eternal punishments. When approaching death, he cries out: , "My God, my God, look not so fierce on me!", Thus, he is afraid to face God. However, in his last thought, "I'll burn my books," Faustus confesses his wrong doings but understands them when it is already too late. These findings demonstrate that Hamlet suffers from psychological and political damage while Faustus is punished spiritually and

for eternity. Therefore, the conclusions made show that unlimited ambitions and inappropriate use of free will are main reasons for the disaster experienced by both characters. So, Hamlet and Doctor Faustus still teach us important lessons about how ambition, choices, responsibility, and tragic downfall are connected.

### **1.13 Conclusion**

In the present research, it has been concluded that ambition, personal choice, and damnation plays an important role in shaping the tragic journeys of the main characters in the plays of Hamlet and Doctor Faustus. The analysis reveals that, although ambition serves as a driving factor for both heroes, they pursue vastly different goals, with Hamlet striving to find out the truth and get revenge, whereas Faustus longs for unlimited knowledge and supreme power. Moreover, it has been found that these tragedies involve serious challenges experienced by the characters along the way; moreover, it is seen that Hamlet faces psychological and political challenges, whereas Faustus experiences spiritual downfall and condemnation.

### **1.14 Recommendations**

In light of this study several recommendations can help strengthen future studies and teaching of Renaissance tragedy:

1. Extend comparative research to include other Renaissance tragic figures such as Macbeth, Othello, or Tamburlaine to see how different personalities and contexts shape tragic downfall.
2. Explore female tragic characters from the Renaissance period to understand how gender influences the portrayal and perception of tragedy.
3. Analyze modern stage and film adaptations of *Hamlet* and *Doctor Faustus* to see how contemporary interpretations reshape audience understanding of fate, free will, and personal responsibility.

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4. Include interdisciplinary approaches that connect literature with philosophy, theology, psychology, or performance studies offering richer perspectives on tragic conflict and catharsis.
5. Encourage classroom discussions on internal conflict, ambition, and moral hesitation in these plays to help students relate historical characters to present day ethical dilemmas.
6. Consider how cultural, religious, and historical contexts of the Renaissance period shaped Shakespeare's and Marlowe's portrayal of tragic heroes.
7. Study the reception of these plays in non-Western cultures to discover universal and culturally specific meanings of tragedy.
8. Examine the role of language such as metaphor, irony, and soliloquy in deepening audience empathy and highlighting characters' internal struggles.

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