



A Sociological Perspective on Drug Mishandling in Contemporary Sesotho Literature: An Analysis of Brian Makara's Poem 'Sethethefatsi'

Soyiso Khetoa ¹ 

¹ Department of African Languages, School of Literature, Language and Media, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.

ABSTRACT

This study examines the social representation of drug abuse in Brian Makara's poem "Sethethefatsi." The prevalence of drug abuse among South African township youth has increased dramatically. This has resulted in the development of diverse intervention techniques at multiple levels across the country. In response to the drug endemic, literary writers like Makara use their art to raise awareness of this pervasive issue. This study argues that poetry serves as a valuable medium for exploring social phenomena because literature often reflects societal experiences. This study is underpinned by the theory of the sociology of literature, which views poetry as a reflection of society, social commentary, and the expression of a collective's consciousness. This research adopts a desktop qualitative research approach to analyse how drugs are represented in Makara's poem. The findings reveal that Makara personifies drugs for two reasons: (a) to portray drugs as an "individual" with harmful intentions infiltrating society; and (b) to depict drugs as a product of those who undermine societal values, whose intention is to obstruct societal development and sustainability. The study demonstrates that literary texts are valuable sources that engage with societal issues. Furthermore, the study signals that the contemporary Sesotho literature critically examines societal challenges that warrant political and policy interventions.

Correspondence

Soyiso Khetoa

Email:

soyiso.khetoa@wits.ac.za

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INTRODUCTION

This study was conceived after realising that South African youth have been ravaged by excessive drug intake. The ramifications of excessive intake of drugs (licensed or unlicensed) have had undesired effects on society and have undermined family structures. To mitigate this undesired reality, literary projects such as poems are devised as a strategy to facilitate consciousness among locals about the undesired repercussions of unsupervised or excessive drug intake. Poems, like any other literary text, play an important role in reporting social experiences that affect communities. In this study, the researcher proposes that analysing the sociological representation of drugs and drug use in literary texts might be effective in bringing about societal awareness of the phenomena. Literature encompasses the author's explanations about social objects and explains how these objects promote the collapse of social order. For this reason, the researcher believes that literature has a role in shaping society. Mitravinda alludes that "at the point when we read literature, we find normal human methods of getting a life".¹ Mitravinda

¹ Kakarla Sai Mitravinda, "Literature and Its Role in Shaping the Society," 2020.

further explicates that in reading literary works we figure out how unique others are in condition and ways of dealing with life, and experience the contrast in what people accept.²

Notwithstanding this important aspect, Zala cautions that literature can be detrimental to society if what is contained within it is used with malice; however, it can also be helpful to society, provided that it is studied or applied positively.³ When used correctly, literature can inspire human civilisation towards self-enrichment, education, self-preservation, etc. Zala indicates that through great literary works, an individual has the opportunity to understand life better and that in many ways, it can change an individual's perspective of life.⁴ In this study, the researcher examines the sociological representation of drugs and the ramifications of drug abuse in a poetic literary text as a medium that reflects social experiences. The research question for this treatise is as follows: How are drugs represented in "*Sethethefatsi*" as a reflection of the context under which this literary text was devised?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature and Society

What occurs in the general public is reflected in artistic works in some structure.⁵ This contention is corroborated by Budey's assertion that literature mirrors society and that social experiences are reflected in literary works in one form or another.⁶ Given Mitravinda and Budey's pronouncements, it is important to explore what characterises society as an important aspect in the development of meaningful literary works. Budey connotes that human society is characterised by the patterns of relationships between individuals who share cultures, traditions, beliefs and values.⁷ In this study, the researcher argues that artistic literary works serve a much deeper purpose than depicting the realities in societies. Literary works aim to eradicate prevailing social ills by reporting on them and their ramifications. Societies are not static, and as times change, so do societies. Change in times introduce an opportunity to acquire helpful or harmful habits. As such, the attributes of a changing society can be depicted in several literary projects that include novels, poems, plays, etc. Therefore, as one reads literature, he/she is introduced to the new worlds of experiences.⁸ Through literature, readers experience tragedies brought about by changes in societal orientation, by political governance that is premised on personal gain, or by any element that seeks to advance societal mobility. In South Africa, Sesotho literary writers, such as KPD Maphalla have protested against the subordination of indigenous people of Africa by segregationist policies of the government under apartheid. South Africa's challenges changed from being political to being economic since the dawn of democracy. This change fuelled several related challenges that include fluctuating crime statistics, poverty, uncontrollable intake of intoxicants, etc. Despite literature being manmade, it reflects very well the prevailing phenomenological challenges that affect human civilisation daily.

Social Functions of Literature

Literature as an emulation of reality may suggest plausible remedies to phenomenal challenges experienced by locals in a given society. As such, literary writers ought to position themselves as a mouthpiece to protest, describe, or suggest remedies against social ills as experienced by members of communities from which they come. Ogundokun indicates that when an art form repeatedly makes certain issues its focus and debates them regularly, the state and the people will pay serious attention to such matters.⁹ Therefore, literature as a product of society has all that it takes to suggest solutions to the challenges in human society.¹⁰ Zala postulates that the main function of literature is to inform and that the social function of literature has far-reaching implications.¹¹ These far-reaching implications may take the form of invoking much-needed consciousness among members of a society about an imminent

² Mitravinda, "Literature and Its Role in Shaping the Society."

³ J. B. Zala, "Literature and Society," *International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Sciences* 1, no. 5 (2013): 26–31.

⁴ Zala, "Literature and Society."

⁵ Mitravinda, "Literature and Its Role in Shaping the Society."

⁶ A. Budey, "Literature and Society," *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 9, no. 6 (2013).

⁷ Budey, "Literature and Society."

⁸ Zala, "Literature and Society."

⁹ Sikiru Adeyemi Ogundokun, "Functions of Literature," *Journal for Foreign Languages* 13, no. 1 (December 27, 2021): 281–95, <https://doi.org/10.4312/vestnik.13.281-295>.

¹⁰ Ogundokun, "Functions of Literature."

¹¹ Zala, "Literature and Society."

challenge that affects individual or societal upliftment such as the prevalence of uncontrollable crime and the abuse of intoxicants as experienced in South African townships. Against this background, this study seeks to analyse the sociological representation of drug abuse as experienced by the author in his context or within the context of what is commonly observed in South African townships. It is important to rely on literature to familiarise yourself with prevalent issues that affect human behaviour and attitudes. To be more knowledgeable about the world, life, cultures and experiences, people need to read more literature.¹² Within the aspect of readers being familiar with the world, literature invokes reader's consciousness about the need to feel other people's pain and suffering and empathise with them. The following detail this aspect of literature.

Literature and Empathy

Koopman and Hakemulder claim that reading literature can improve self-knowledge, make people more aware of the plights of those suffering, and make them more willing to take action to help them.¹³ When dealing with a literary text, the reader's empathy becomes a significant avenue to consider since readers may evaluate the significance of a text by relying on the ethical principle that governs their consciousness. Therefore, literary writers appeal to readers' consciousness with the hope that readers themselves may possess solutions to the plight of those who are suffering. According to Scott, "Various studies have found that people who engage frequently with fiction tend to have better social cognition or empathy than those who do not."¹⁴ The following section expounds on the characteristics of African literature. African writers relied on their creative skills to communicate individual suffering and issues that affected Africans in general.

The Nature of African Literature

Africans in Africa experienced decades of colonial rule, where Africans experienced inhumane treatment under the leadership of colonisers. Nkadimeng opines that "during the period of colonial tyranny, African writers had been writing from the colonial perspective without realising their own African philosophical thinking."¹⁵ Themes of religion, especially Christianity, influenced African writing in that period. As such, African people have been dehumanised and demoralised by colonial policies and forced to detest their own mental creation." As a result of decades of an oppressive system, indigenous Africans found ways to revolt and protest the conditions of Africans. Literate Africans advanced the rejection of colonial rule by embarking on a quest to conscientiously educate readers about the inhuman experiences that Africans were experiencing. Thereby covertly suggesting remedies to their plight. It should be noted that in pre-colonial contact, Africans creatively expressed literary thoughts in orature, where societal values and historical data were expressed by the older generation to the upcoming generation. In orature, Africans sought to preserve African cultures and their traditions. Post-colonial contact, literary projects such as poetry, novels, etc, started to unmask human experiences in different eras. Therefore, a multitude of literary pieces discussed controversies regarding racial insubordination, political conflict, gender disparity, human rights, and hardships.

The controversies mentioned above influenced the themes upon which many African writers in Africa premised their contentions. Within literary forms among writers of Sesotho, Nkadimeng citing Selepe indicates that Sesotho literary projects encompassed varying themes in different periods: (1) "1900 – 1930, this period was dominated by Lesotho authors, and it characterised the dominance of the religious and educational ISAs, (2) 1930 – 1960, which saw emerging Basotho authors from South Africa joining their counterparts in Lesotho."¹⁶ This period introduced what became to be known as the

¹² A. A. Maiga and A. S. Coulibaly, "The Role of Literature and the Accountability of the Artist," *International Journal of English Literature and Culture* 4, no. 9 (2016).

¹³ Eva Maria Koopman and Frank Hakemulder, "Effects of Literature on Empathy and Self-Reflection: A Theoretical-Empirical Framework," *Journal of Literary Theory* 9, no. 1 (2015): 79–111.

¹⁴ S. Levin et al., "Elementary School Principals' Professional Learning: Current Status and Future Needs," *Learning Policy Institute: Research Brief*, 2020, 1–11.

¹⁵ P.A. Nkadimeng, *Language as cultural protest in African literature: A postcolonial perspective*. Unpublished master's dissertation. Potchefstroom University, 2001.

¹⁶ Nkadimeng, *Language as cultural protest in African literature: A postcolonial perspective*; T.J. Selepe, *Some implications of media policy and ethics in literary*.

makgoweng motif, an aspect of the economic ISA, and (3) 1960 – 1990s, which saw a significant shift from matters of national interest to a variety of social matters”. In the 1990s, there were transformative debates in South Africa, paving the way for a democratic government introduced in 1994. After the inception of a democratic government, stringent laws were relaxed. This enabled free movement within the country. Moreover, this relaxation of stringent policies introduced novice social abnormalities that undermined the social fibre that kept societies intact. The next section will highlight some of the problems that spiraled in the new system.

Sesotho Poetry

Sesotho poetry is a literary term used to describe a literary work of art referred to as *thothokiso/ reneketso*, which is a poetic description of either animate or inanimate objects, events or situations and even human feelings or experiences at times.¹⁷ In this study, Brian Makara’s poem describes an inanimate object concerning its implications in society. Furthermore, as Maimane and Mathonsi alluded to earlier, in most African societies, including the Sesotho society, boys used to adopt several approaches to propose love to girls.¹⁸ Therefore, Sesotho poetry is pregnant with images that depict social experiences among Basotho, and between Basotho and other nations. The following section discusses a phenomenon that is observed socially, which has undesired consequences for the society.

Drugs and Social Context of South Africa

South African townships have been affected by excessive illicit drug intake among the youth and adults for more than a decade. This situation has been exacerbated by political, economic and family-orientated challenges. It is argued by Fellingham et al., that “South Africa is a society in transition.¹⁹ Drug use correlates strongly with the pressures placed upon social capital by rapid modernisation and the decline in traditional social relationships and forms of family structure...another factor contributing to the increased prominence of illicit drug use in South African society is high unemployment”. The economic situation in the country has been devastating such that the country’s graduates’ cohort struggle to secure employment placement, thereby leading to undesired behaviour. South Africa’s political, economic and social structures have rendered its population more vulnerable to drug use.²⁰ In recent times, there has been an increase in the use of ‘nyaope’ among youth. Consequently, due to the addiction to illicit drugs, learners drop out of school to find ways to feed their addiction. Sedibe and Hendricks revealed that among learners in previously disadvantaged township schools, adolescent learners become involved in drug use due to their lack of identity formation and the need to belong.²¹ Motivations for drug use include several other factors, including the ones indicated by Sedibe and Hendricks.²²

The United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention profiling South Africa indicates that “drug trafficking and abuse have escalated in recent years, particularly in the years before and shortly after the installation of a democratically elected 1994, which ended the country’s socio-economic and political isolation.²³ The relaxation of restrictive policies on movement has enhanced international trade and commerce, triggering an increase in drug trafficking. South Africa has an excellent infrastructure of roads and rail, telecommunication, airports, and seaport facilities. All of these are also used to transmit illicit drugs, particularly cocaine, heroin and methaqualone”. Traffickers have found innovative ways to traffic and distribute illicit drugs into the country. This illegal trade of drugs has afforded locals easy access to these intoxicants.

production: A preliminary survey of Sesotho literature. South African Journal of African Languages 17, no 2 (1997), 80–84.

¹⁷ Ketlalelang C Maimane and Nhlanhla Mathonsi, “Echoes of Lithoko in Modern Sesotho Poetry: An Intertextual Perspective,” *Literator (Potchefstroom. Online)* 42, no. 1 (2021): 1–9.

¹⁸ Madira Thetso and Mabileba Kolobe, “Poetry as a Strategy in Courting: The Case of Basotho Boys,” *Southern African Journal for Folklore Studies* 31, no. 2 (May 18, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.25159/2663-6697/9475>.

¹⁹ R K Fellingham et al., “The ‘War on Drugs’ Has Failed: Is Decriminalisation of Drug Use a Solution to the Problem in South Africa?,” *South African Journal of Bioethics and Law* 5, no. 2 (November 23, 2012), <https://doi.org/10.7196/sajbl.219>.

²⁰ Fellingham et al., “The ‘War on Drugs’ Has Failed: Is Decriminalisation of Drug Use a Solution to the Problem in South Africa?”

²¹ Mabatho Sedibe and Nellie Gloria Patricia Hendricks, “Drug Abuse Amongst Adolescent Learners in Townships,” *Interchange* 52, no. 1 (March 4, 2021): 17–39, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10780-020-09407-z>.

²² Sedibe and Hendricks, “Drug Abuse Amongst Adolescent Learners in Townships.”

²³ United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, *South Africa Country Profile on Drugs and Crime*, 1999.

UNODCCP indicates that “Various factors have contributed to the increase in abuse, including an increase in legal and illegal migration, reductions in internal and border controls following the collapse of the apartheid regime, social and political liberation which also facilitated the arrival of new youths movements such as the ‘rave culture.’”²⁴ Peltzer et al., postulate that the influx of new international cultural trends among the more affluent segments of the population is associated with the increase in drug use and abuse as well as increases in violent and organised crime.²⁵ Peltzer et al further exclaim, “Drug use correlates strongly with rapid modernisation and the decline in traditional social relationships and forms of family structure.”²⁶ Among the non-White population, social injustice and the weakened family bonds which resulted from decades of apartheid policies have created an environment in which temporary escape from the harsh reality of everyday life is often sought through the consumption of psychoactive substances.”

The unprecedented drug intake among youth in South Africa has been attributed to various factors. Van Zyl indicates the following factors as reasons that encourage excessive use of intoxicants: the vulnerability of youths, peer pressure, inadequate role modelling by parents and significant others, community tolerance, availability of drugs, underactualisation of metaphysical values, poverty and unemployment, and violence.²⁷ Furthermore, Van Zyl postulates that “the etiology of drug use amongst South African youths, considered in an integrated perspective, would result in a better understanding thereof and could serve as a permanent basis for addressing the problem of drug use amongst South African youths at any particular period”.²⁸

The War on Drugs

The prevalence and continued production of illicit drugs in African states is partly encouraged by the unethical conduct portrayed by figures in authority. In South Africa, residents continue to allege that members of the police service benefit unduly from drug lords, in exchange for turning a blind eye towards their illegal trade. This factor alone is not sufficient to explain the diverse social challenges experienced due to the prevalence of drugs in social spaces. Between African states, a homogenous response is not possible given that each country has its own unique experiences with drugs. Fellingham et al opine that according to the Global Commission Report on Drugs Policy, the current global approach of prohibiting drugs and punishing individual drug users is not only ineffective in addressing and lessening the drug problem but also exacerbates the burden that drug abuse places on society.²⁹

METHODOLOGY

In every research inquiry, the researcher systematically and explicitly selects an appropriate approach that will lead to appropriate results. Due to the descriptive nature of this enquiry, this study adopted a qualitative research approach. Punch alludes that qualitative methodology is a type of social science research that collects and works with non-numerical data, seeking to interpret meaning from these data to help us understand social experiences or phenomena in a naturalistic environment.³⁰ This methodology is concerned with developing appropriate explanations for the existence of an experienced social phenomenon. If a qualitative approach is employed accordingly as Mokala et al indicate, it guarantees that the topic of this study is sufficiently explored.³¹

In this study, the factors influencing the excessive intake of substances to escape physical or psychological pain were discussed. It has been established that there are varying factors that encourage South Africans to engage in substance abuse. To reach certain conclusions about causative effects and

²⁴ United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, *South Africa Country Profile on Drugs and Crime*.

²⁵ Karl Peltzer et al., “Illicit Drug Use and Treatment in South Africa: A Review,” *Substance Use & Misuse* 45, no. 13 (2010): 2221–43.

²⁶ Peltzer et al., “Illicit Drug Use and Treatment in South Africa: A Review.”

²⁷ Lenka Van Zyl, Mariette van Der Merwe, and Shingairai Chigeza, “Adolescents’ Lived Experiences of Their Pregnancy and Parenting in a Semi-Rural Community in the Western Cape,” *Social Work* 51, no. 2 (2015): 151–73.

²⁸ Van Zyl, van Der Merwe, and Chigeza, “Adolescents’ Lived Experiences of Their Pregnancy and Parenting in a Semi-Rural Community in the Western Cape.”

²⁹ Fellingham et al., “The ‘War on Drugs’ Has Failed: Is Decriminalisation of Drug Use a Solution to the Problem in South Africa?”

³⁰ K. F. Punch, *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches* (SAGE Publications, 2013).

³¹ Ntsoaki Teresa Mokala et al., “The Impact of Multilingualism on Teaching and Learning: A Case of Sesotho Home Language in One University in South Africa,” in *Handbook of Research on Teaching in Multicultural and Multilingual Contexts* (IGI Global, 2022), 170–88.

drug representation in Makara's "*Sethethefatsi*" poem, this researcher thus read through, analysed and sorted emerging topics to identify the essential attributes of the representation of drugs within the confirms of this Sesotho literary text. The qualitative research approach was employed in this treatise due to its suitability to investigate issues that have to do with human experiences. Furthermore, this approach was the 'best' for simplifying and managing data without obliterating its complexity and context.

To adequately decimate the messages contained in the selected poem, it is important to determine the context that inspired the author to craft this literary text. To put this poem in context, it is important to consider some information about the author and his surroundings.³² Makara was born in 1991 in Ladybrand, eastern Free State. He graduated from his primary and secondary education in this region. Asked about what inspired him to become an author, he responded³³ "*The lifestyle we live, I want to teach people through my writing and how to become more responsible*". According to this website, his first published book was about gangsterism. The second avenue to explore is the place where the author lives. The author resides in Ladybrand, a relatively small town in the eastern Free State, where most black Africans live in destitution. According to Mnguni, Ladybrand is an agricultural town that hosts just over four thousand residents.³⁴ This scholar further expounds that this town is located near Lesotho, and there is daily inter-country movement between South Africa and Lesotho since the town is considered the gateway for Lesotho residents to enter South Africa. Since the collapse of Apartheid, there has been an increase in the use of illicit drugs. This has had implications for the country's health system. It has also had unwanted ramifications in societies.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS /FINDINGS

Data analysis and discussion

This study employed interpretive sociology to analyse the meanings embedded in the "*Sethethefatsi*" poem. The researcher's assumption here was that "*Sethethefatsi*" has been devised as a product of social actors and participants. Hence this inquiry used interpretive approach to analyse the poem. The poem is written in Sesotho but the researcher will provide English equivalents. The primary focus is to interpret the meaning of the author. The poem is analysed per stanza.

Sethethefatsi

Ha o itshwabele keng?
O sentse kelello tsa batjha;
Ha o itshwabele keng?
O mmolai, o bolaile bokamoso;

Drug

Why are you not ashamed of yourself?
 You have corrupted the minds of the youth;
 Why are you not ashamed of yourself?
 You are a killer, you have killed the future;

In this stanza, the reader becomes aware of the personification of drugs. Melion and Ramakers expound that personification is a rhetorical figure by which an inanimate figure is given human identity or 'face'.³⁵ Personification operates in multiple registers: sensory and spiritual, visible and invisible, concrete and abstract, and it deals with facts, opinions, and beliefs.³⁶ The author speaks directly to the drug as if it has human senses. His account seeks to expound that the drug has caused havoc within communities and has destroyed dreams. The first line is interrogative, such that the reader's perception of drugs must be aligned with that of the author to understand this poem. The author is aware that drugs do not have communicative competency skills, but those who deal in drugs possess this skill. Therefore, this artistic expression in the form of personification seeks to elicit a reaction from dealers. The author pleads with 'dealers' to be conscious of the ramifications of their service to the youth.

Hei wena sethethefatsi;

Hey you, poisonous drug;

³² <https://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/authornovelist2>

³³ <https://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/authornovelist2>

³⁴ P. S. Mnguni, "School Choice and Commuting in Ladybrand, Free State: A Socio-Economic Analysis" (University of South Africa, 2020).

³⁵ W. S. Melion and B. Ramakers, *Personification: An Introduction* (Koninklijke Brill NV: Leiden, 2016).

³⁶ Melion and Ramakers, *Personification: An Introduction*.

*Ba lla sa mmokotsane batswadi;
Ba re uwele qenehelo e kae?
Sa ka moso setjhaba se timetse;*

Parents are weeping like mourning doves;
They ask, where is your compassion?
The future generation is doomed;

There is a great sense that the author gives human characteristics to this inanimate substance. This viewpoint views drugs as an active participant in a society whose objective is to subjugate the youth to nothingness. In the first line of the second stanza, the author's tone appears to address a stubborn person who is less interested in societal concerns. The author is perplexed by the 'drugs' inability to show compassion to grieving parents whose sons' and daughters' demise has been the result of drugs. This stanza depicts that the prevalence and intake of illicit drugs have destroyed family structures. The social expectation is that children will bury their parents, but the prevalence of illicit drug intake has changed how things should happen naturally. In the current dispensation, parents lose their children to drugs and through drugs. Drugs (illicit) have created a burden on families and their members. This burden is also extended to society because users of illicit drugs do not function with the expected social values.

*Fatshe le hloka sebopeho;
Le hloka bo tjhatsi bokamoso;
Le nyoretswe ba ka moso batjha;
Le ranthane, le batla puso;*

The world is without order;
It longs for a hopeful future;
It thirsts for the youth of tomorrow;
It is in chaos, it desire ethical governance;

Stanza 3 introduces the reader to the ramifications of drug abuse. Semantically this stanza depicts what has been the result of excessive use of drugs. The world is in chaos. There is an urgent need for intervention to save the world from destruction. The inadequacy of appropriate interventions paints a bleak future for future generations. Therefore, practical mitigating strategies should be devised and enforced upon locals to secure the future of this world.

*Jo! Sa timela sa rantsho;
Ya eba masisapelo, ya eba dillo;
Sa mmokotsane selo sa tlala;
Jo! Sethethefatsi mohau o kae?*

Oh no! The Black nation is perishing;
It became grief, it became cries of sorrow;
There is a prevalence of a piercing cry all over;
Oh no! Drug, have you no mercy?

The author, as a social actor, observes that 'drugs' are destroying indigenous Africans. This giant of a social problem has consumed Africans in such a way that there is no peace in the land. Drug use is often associated with criminal elements. To feed their drug habits, youth, especially in South Africa, resort to innovative ways of making money to get drugs. These innovative ways are characterised by stealing from families, society, businesses and state properties. This behavior has a direct effect on family, society, business and the state. The ruthlessness of taking psychoactive drugs has undesired effects where family structures are compromised because of behaviors that are associated with psychoactive drug users.

*O sehloho sethethfatsi, mosa o kae?
Mabitla a ahlamela batjha;
Ya eba dillo ka baka la hao;
Ruri wena moleko towe, kgotso e kae?
O tau e harolang e sa botse.*

You ruthless drug, where is your mercy?
Graves gape, awaiting the youth;
Cries rise up because of you;
Indeed, you deadly temptation, where is your peace?
You are a lion that devours without a word.

The last stanza emphasises that indeed psychoactive drug intake is undermining the fibre that keeps society together. This stanza portrays drugs as the devil that is devoid of mercy, continuing to steal the youth from their parents. The author indicates that creeps into society like a thief at night that leaves sorrows behind.

Makara's poem offers a social critique about drug abuse. In it, drugs are portrayed as a destructive social force that undermines social value. The personification of drugs presents drugs a ruthless and merciless human being. The exercise usage of drugs among youth has consequences that not only affect

the users, but their families and society at large. Therefore, unsupervised usage of drugs leads to unimaginable suffering especially among vulnerable communities.

DISCUSSION

This study was conceived after realising that South African youth have been ravaged by excessive drug intake. It sought to interrogate the portrayal of drugs in “*Sethethefatsi*”, a poem by Brian Makara, by relying on the sociology of literature. This theoretical underpinning indicates that to gain a deeper understanding of a literary text, it is important to look at the text as a product of social experiences. Therefore, based on this account, the researcher analysed “*Sethethefatsi*” through the sociology of literature lenses. Before the analyses of this poem, it had been determined in the preceding sections that psychoactive drugs are used excessively among South African youth. It has also been stated that the situation has been exacerbated by political, economic and family-oriented challenges. To gain an adequate understanding of this literary text, this research employed a qualitative approach, which is characterised by an ability to adequately capture people's emotions and opinions about a phenomenon that is observed in society. In “*Sethethefatsi*” it can be detected that the author is concerned about the plight of the youth and the future of the society where this influx of drug usage is commonly observed.

Sethethefatsi is a perfect example of a text in which the author reflects on a phenomenon that is currently affecting society to communicate a message of awareness about a specific problem. The author of this poem has intentionally personified drugs with two motivations: the first being that he wanted his readers to see drugs as a person who has come into society with impure intentions. Secondly, he views drugs as the product of people who seek to undermine societal values, and whose intentions do not align with the goals of developing society through the brilliance of the youth.

This poem adequately captures the sociological view of drugs as presented by the author of the poem. To understand something, the reader should ignore its inherent properties and focus on what it does. Therefore, in this poem, drugs have been portrayed in terms of their implications in society. The author communicates to the readers that it cannot be that families are destroyed by something that can be managed by policies and that it cannot be parents who have to bury their children as a direct consequence of drugs. Makara's message in this poem is that there is a devil within townships that is destroying people's livelihoods. It can also be deduced that the author's religious principles are evident in his offerings, as he views drugs as a cruel devil that destroys youth without mercy. This study has been successful in applying the sociology of literature within a qualitative paradigm to interrogate the interpretation of drugs or drug abuse within the restrictions of this text as a mirror of social experiences.

It should be noted that, in this poem, drugs have been presented in terms of a symbolic representation between an individual and society. In the poem, reference is made to the fact that drugs (illicit) contribute to health and illness concerns among youth. Members of society share similar experiences with the abuse of drugs in that users of illicit drugs portray behaviour that affects society. Drug users employ many strategies to maintain their lifestyle. This includes contact violence, violence against property, etc. These actions do not promise a fruitful future, nor do they promise a safe environment for members of society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This research recommends further exploration of such literary texts to deepen understanding of the interplay between literature and societal challenges.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated how Makara's *Sethethefatsi* serves as a reflection of social challenges posed by drugs among South African youth. The use of the sociology of literature as a theoretical lens through which Makara's work has been evaluated has highlighted the importance of understanding literary work within broader social contexts. Makara's poem serves as a powerful medium for raising awareness about the mishandling of drugs and their implications on individuals, families, communities, and the country. Makara's portrayal of drugs as a metaphorical 'devil' that preys on youth due to social realities in South Africa stresses the urgency of addressing the problem of drug in South African communities through collective action and policy interventions.

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ABOUT AUTHOR

Dr. Soyiso Khetoa is a sociolinguist and the current Head of Department of African Languages at the University of the Witwatersrand in the School of Literature, Language and Media, who is making a notable impact to the field of African languages sociolinguistics. With a diverse and robust academic portfolio, Dr. Khetoa has authored numerous journal articles and book chapters, with additional research

articles under review for publication. His scholarly interests span a wide range of topics, including multilingualism, translanguaging, language teaching and learning, humanizing teaching pedagogy, the re-intellectualization of African languages, socio-onomastics, narrative arts, and language ideologies. Dr. Khetoa has presented his research at prestigious conferences locally and internationally, sharing insights that shape contemporary sociolinguistic discourse. In addition to his academic endeavors, he serves as a peer reviewer for various esteemed academic journals, playing a pivotal role in advancing research and scholarship in his field.