

Free literature review on drug use abuse

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Carter Sickels novel, *The Evening hour*, revolves around the devastation of the West Virginia landscape as well as that of the local communities. The main character in the story is twenty-seven year old Cole Freeman who works as an aide in a nursing home. He also indulges in the sale of illegal drugs, which he either steals or buys from the local elderly population in the nursing home. It portrays several aspects of drug abuse in any given community, which includes its causes and effects in the society.

The novel portrays poverty as one of the major factors that drives the community to engage in drug abuse. The twenty-seven year old, Cole Freeman, opts to sell illegal drugs in order to fight the poverty in their family. He comes from a community which characterized by very scarce sources of earning a livelihood. The major economic activity in the neighborhood is the mining of sulfur. Due to greed and the rather high exploitation of the resource, most of the members of the community especially Cole's family have resulted into other means of generating income to the family. To depict the economic state of the region, Webb asserts:

After a decade of brutal mountain top removal, the constant blasting, flooding and pollution has driven the natives either out of their homes or out of their minds. The water is undrinkable, their houses are cracked beyond repair from the explosions and the coal company's offers for the now worthless land they own keep dropping (6).

Another cause of drug abuse is that lack of good societal or rather religious teachings in the community in question. Stidham asserts that Cole is to a large extent a victim of his grandfather's Pentecostal religion (74). He uses his religion to fuel division in the community-the saved and the damned. He

condemned the ‘whorish’ behaviors of Cole’s mother making her to leave her son at a tender age-17 years. Parental guidance is a very fundamental aspect especially in teenagers as it enables them choose wisely besides modeling good behavior (Publisher’s weekly 30). The departure of his mother deprived him of moral guidance, which could have enabled him to live a better life. He ends up being a drug dealer and a thief. When his mother returns, when he is 27 years old, Cole has already developed strong habits not only in drug dealing but also in stealing. He is also caught up in a some form of immorality thus unable to choose between his many girlfriends i. e. Charlotte, Lacy and Terry Lose (Stidham 75).

The economic difficulties faced by the community drive the drug peddlers to do the trade. The ‘drug suppliers’ in the novel are driven by the need to meet their healthcare bills. As aforementioned, Cole gets the drugs from the elderly who sell their unused prescription drugs for money, which they use in settling their bills in the nursing home (Webb 12). This depicts that poverty in the society has fueled both the supply as well as the sale of drugs within the community. The poor elderly patients in the nursing home spent much of their time in the coils but they were unable to save enough money to enable them cater for their hospital bills:

Larry Potts was parked in a wheelchair, twiddling his thumbs. He had thick meaty hands, but his thumbs twirled like little jewelry-box ballerinas. Larry used to deep the mines, crawling on his hands and knees in the dark (Webb 10).

The novel also explores the role of peers in the propagation of drug abuse in a given region. The target market for the drugs that Cole buys from the

nursing home is the youth within the community. It comprises of a group of his former classmates and friends. They not only used the drugs but also assisted in distributing them. With such connections or rather networks, it is quite difficult to stop the sale of illegal drugs within the neighborhood. For instance, although most of his friends knew about his indulgence in illegal drugs, they did not take any measure(s) to stop his illegal business. Such networks that exercise a high level of secrecy pose a great danger not only to themselves but also to the entire community due to the probable effects of drug abuse.

The novel also depicts the negative effects that drug abuse has on a given economy. For instance, it deprived the elderly people in the nursing home adequate medical care. The major contributing aspect is the availability of a market where they could sell their prescriptions. Due to their lack of rational judgment, one can say that most of them might have forgone their healthcare needs just to get the money Cole was offering for their drugs. Cole argues that as long as no one “ gets hooked” and the elderly people within the nursing home who gave up their medication feel no pain, everything was fine (Webb 13). He ignores the fact that the lack of pain does not necessarily mean that one has a good health condition or rather they were already well.

Another effect of drug abuse is the propagation of risky behaviors. One of the notable behaviors from the text is theft. Cole develops and habit of theft whereby he causes him to steal drugs but also other valuables from the patients in the centre where he works. He had a marked “ which patient owned which watch, ring, brooch and bracelet-every valuable he can steal

when their backs are turned-that he unloads at the pawnshop after he gets off work” (Webb 12). This makes Cole not only a drug dealer but also a thief. Other negative effects that are castigated by the use of drugs as portrayed in the novel are sexual immorality, homosexuality in a Christian dominated community and hypocrisy. For instance, Cole’s father who is the pastor in his church does not uphold Christian values and allows his son to continue during illegal businesses in the community.

Sickels has also explored the possible sources for addictive drugs in any given community. Research has shown that there are three type of illegal sources of drugs in any given community. The sources include the “ white market”, ‘ grey market’ and the black ‘ market’ (Bennett et al 81). The ‘ white market’ refers to the over-the counter source of drugs, the ‘ grey market’ refers to legally prescribed drugs being sold illegally and the ‘ black market’ refers to illegally imported or distributed drugs such as the drugs bought from the streets from a supplier. Among the different sources, only the first source is legal since it comprises a form of drug misuse when a drug is used in a manner that is not recommended for therapeutic purpose. Cole is involved in the grey market of drugs. He buys or even steals drugs from the elderly in the healthcare centre and sells them in the streets. Grey market drugs are those originally obtained on prescription from medical practitioners and re-sold for the purpose of drug misuse. Some of the most common drugs sold under this market include opiates (such as cocaine) that are often prescribed to treat pain, depressants prescribed to treat anxiety and sleep disorders, and stimulants prescribed to treat narcolepsy, attention-deficit, hyperactivity and obesity (Ibid). Most of these illnesses are common

among the elderly in the society. It follows that most of the drugs that Cole obtained from the elderly in the nursing home were highly valued as well as needed among the potential customers in the neighborhood. His continued trade can be attributed to the constant demand of the drugs within the neighborhood.

The novel depicts several aspects of drug abuse in any given community, which includes its causes and effects in the society. Sickels believes that poverty is one of the major causes of drug abuse in any given community. He gives picture of the poor community where people are looking for all possible means of getting money. The poor elderly people in the community opt to sell their medicines to get money for paying their bills while Cole uses the opportunity to make money for his personal needs. The book also portrays the role of peer groups in promoting the sale of illegal drugs as well as drug abuse. They provide not only motivation but also a market for the drug dealers. Drug dealing, as depicted in the novel, promotes several evils in the society. They include theft and immorality.

Works Cited

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