

Teen pregnancy essay sample



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a. Background Information

For a very long time now, the world has been faced with many issues related to or affecting young people. Not that any one person can label the young as problematic or even socially delinquent, but that their very way of life, and seemingly too fast bodily changes, that they cannot afford to cope with in “the right,” is partly to account for this. The adolescents, particularly those in the age bracket of 10 to 20 years, have been noted as very vulnerable to these changes in life. In the United States of America, one of the major issues that parents and the young people in their teens have had to grapple with is the souring rate at which teenagers are getting pregnant. The U. S. Virgin Islands is a place where this problem has been very recurrent and, more so, rampant (APWA, 1990).

b. Statement of Purpose

This research will seek to have an open look at this controversial issue, as it is in the Virgin Islands, in general. In particular, it aims to analyze teenage pregnancy in these islands, with a particular interest and focus on the attitudes of the residents who live on the islands of St. Thomas and St. John. The research will also seek to discuss and review those measures that have been used or are still being used to deal with the problem of teenage pregnancy in the Virgin Islands

c. Problem Statement

Americans as well as other people in its enclaves (notably the Virgin Islands) one of the major issues that parents and the young people in their teens face

in their everyday life; the constantly increasing rate of which teenagers are getting themselves pregnant, without any preparation for the expected baby or the burden of nursing a pregnancy for nine months. Teenage pregnancy has been an issue that has had serious implications, not only to the teenager involved or her parents, guardians and/or close friends, but also to the concerned schools and colleges, and even the entire state and federal government. This problem has been all over the United States, affecting all people. Since, not one American can claim to be safe. This problem has to be addressed.

d. Research Questions

There are a number of closely related issues that have played a key role in teenage pregnancy. It is from those roles that this research seeks to answer the questions below:

1. What is the relationship between teen pregnancy and the economic state of the Virgin Islands?
2. What role does culture and tradition play in the teen pregnancy?
3. Is there a relationship between attitudes of the people and the problem of teen pregnancy?

e. Hypothesis

The following hypothesis has been developed to aid in addressing the research questions:

1. Tourism is responsible for the high rate of teen pregnancy in the Virgin Islands.
2. The negative attitude of the people has worsened the problem of teen pregnancy.
3. An abandonment of the indigenous culture has contributed to the problem of teen pregnancy.

f. Research Objectives

The research seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- A) To find out the relationship between the current economic status of the islands of St. Thomas and St. John and the prevalence of teen pregnancy in the area.
- B) To establish the role played by culture and tradition in preventing or curbing teen pregnancy.
- C) To ascertain the relationship, if any, between the attitudes and way of life of the people on the two islands, and the rate at which teenagers there are getting themselves pregnant.

g. Significance of the Research

There are very adverse and far-reaching impacts that are associated with teen pregnancy which, in fact, can't ever be denied. Whenever a young girl has found herself pregnant and expecting a baby, she was not, the least, prepared for the resulting trauma; it's too much for her to bear. This

research will provide ways to help young girls deal with the problem of teen pregnancy. Aside from that, this research will put to the forefront the, otherwise, highly secretive issue of sex, so that the young ladies and men will come to appreciate the role played by sex education in shaping the lives of those who are partakers of sex. In addition, the importance of sex education, not only being for adults and/or the married, but, also, for the young and growing, re-enforcing that sex education should never be obtainable by whom are seen as of a “matured mind-frame,” but by those naïve to responsibility, as well.

This research will also address the punitive issues on the Island of St. Thomas and St. John that has to deal with the role that foreigners play in the sex industry, in general, and sexual child-enslavement, in particular. Through this research, so-called tourists and their cronies will get to know the serious nature of their actions and hopefully reform; If not, the law enforcement agencies will be alert to such violations, making it so easier for them to hunt down tourism-affiliated perpetrators of an illegal sex industry.

Literature Review

The United States Virgin Islands is a group of islands found in the Caribbean, and they are an insular area of the United States of America. Geographically, the islands are part of the Virgin Islands archipelago and are located in the Leeward Islands of the Lesser Antilles. The islands consist of the main islands of St. Croix, St. John and St. Thomas, along with the much smaller, but historically distinct island, Water Island, among the others (VIUS, 1984).

Their total land area is about 133. 73 square miles or 346. 4 km² (Cohen, 2004).

h. Teen Pregnancies in the USA: Statistics

According to The Virgin Islands Daily News Issue of 23rd September, 2009, more than 1 million girls, aged between 10 and 20 years, become pregnant each year in the United States of America, 11percent of all women ages 15-19, with over 40 percent of all females under 20 having at least one pregnancy. The publication adds that over three fourths of these teen pregnancies are unplanned and usually account for about one fourth of all accidental pregnancies each year (Hunter, 1993).

According to the publication, about 55 percent of teen pregnancies end in birth, 31% in abortion, and 14 percent in miscarriages. Of those women, the women that are aged between 10 to 20 years choose to become mothers; one out of four of them will have a second child within two years of her first (Boyer, 1983). Each year in the United States, 20 percent of girls aged between 10 and 20 years who are sexually active become pregnant. The United States leads the developed nations in teen pregnancy, with twice the teen pregnancies of Canada, and nine times the number of Japan.

i. Tourism and Teenage pregnancy

Tourism has been the main source of livelihood for the residents of the Virgin Islands. In the mid 1900s the Virgin Islands experienced a dawn of new times that were more prosperous and happier (Ebony Magazine, 1987). Tourists seeking the warmth, beauty and relaxation the islands are able to offer,

vacationed in all of the islands. As this new dawn gripped the residents, hotels, restaurants and shops began popping up on beachfront properties and in main towns. With the continued rise in business and growth in the economy, a rise in the population came, as immigrants from neighboring areas flocked to the U. S. Virgin Islands to seek work in the booming tourism sector.

With the rise in population, there arose problems of various kinds. However, the most noticeable and one with the direct consequences was that of a rise in cases of reported pregnancies among teenagers (Jagdeo, 1984).

Although tourism has always been associated with antisocial behavior, not only in the United States, but the world over, the sector has been marked as among the major factors that have led to the alarming figures of reported pregnancies among teenagers in the US Virgin Islands. Readily, tourists visit the territory to use their money and anyone who is willing to do what the tourists wish, in exchange for money. Love-seeking is quickly becoming a form of tourism on the islands of St. Thomas and St. John, which are fondly referred to by the locals as the Rock Island (St. Thomas) and the Love Island (St. John), respectively.

j. The Culture of Saint Thomas and Saint John Islands

The islands of St. John and St. Thomas, just like the other islands that constitute the United States Virgin Islands, are steeped into history and culture. As the former is less valuable in the V. I., it is the cultural aspect of the residents of these islands that matter and have played a part in the attitudes of the people towards those who find themselves pregnant before

they are ready for childbearing. Notable among the cultural aspects of these people is the strict caste system that has existed from many years in the past. This has meant the people naturally divide themselves into classes, and with this derived the problem of stigmatization. This attitude has served to blow the problem out of proportion (Dookhan, 2002).

k. Efforts Aimed at Solving the problem

Owing to rampant cases of teen pregnancy in the US Virgin Islands, several measures have been adopted and implemented with the aim of greatly reducing the number of teenagers who find themselves with a burden to nurse babies, while still unprepared for them. These measures have been particularly employed in the leading tourist areas in the islands of St. Thomas and St. John. These cases have deliberately been targeted as they lead in the number of teen pregnancy in the entire US Virgin Islands. Both individuals and social groups have been involved in these campaigns. Some of the measures have included the following:

l. Civil Societies Sponsored Programs

The Rotary Club of St. Thomas, under the chairmanship of past president Mary Gleason, has adopted, funded, and sponsored a very popular program that targets the young people. The program, under the name Baby Think It Over, has been there and running in the Virgin Islands since 1996. The makers of Baby Think It Over want to help reverse the trends where young teenage girls have found themselves mothers, without really wanting babies at that time. Baby Think It Over is the centerpiece of many early pregnancy prevention programs in high schools, middle schools, churches, and

community centers. It is approximated that over 40, 000 Baby Think It Over dolls have now found homes, not only in the island of St. Thomas, but also on other islands in the US Virgin Islands and beyond. The program offers education to young people on the need to rethink having a child, before making any decision about having a baby.

Through the program, middle and high school students are learning what it's like to be a parent by using the most real way possible. They are provided with life-like dolls (toys) that are about the size of a real baby that is aged close to 3 months. Usually, these state-of-the-art babies are fitted with computerized chips that enact human-like behaviors from a child that requires nurturing needs. The student has to figure out what the baby's needs are and successfully tend to them, while the chip in the doll records what type and how the needs of the doll have been addressed, during the stay with the student. Once the need is met, the baby automatically stops crying.

The program is designed to teach young people, especially those in their teens, how hard and difficult it is and it can be to raise a child, as well as how much responsibility is placed on the parents of children. That aside, the Baby Think It Over program also allows the teens to experience the real demands of childcare. The students who take part in the program are often monitored and must have their parent's permission for them to take part in the program.

m. Successes of the Program

It has been noted that after spending a number of days and nights with the Baby Think It Over infant simulator that most of the participating teens in the program realize that they are not yet ready to take on the pressures and responsibilities of nursing babies or parenting.

The program has been noted as one of the reasons that teen pregnancies have been reduced in the Virgin Islands. Due to its success, the Rotary Club of St. Thomas has continued to sponsor this program and has introduced the “baby dolls program” to the main schools in the Virgin Islands. The club aims to continue to make a difference in the community and to continue its goal to reduce pregnancies among teenagers with this wonderful program.