
GP Model Essay - Modern Society**To what extent does modern society undermine the elderly?**

The fast paced and technologically advanced society of today has produced tremendous changes in our daily lives. Consequently, such influence extends to the elder class of society and has disrupted their comforting lives before. It is no surprise then that debates emerge regarding the extent of impact of aspects of modern society on daily lives on the elderly. Traditionalists assert that technological, economic and social aspects of modern society undermine the harmonious lifestyle of the elderly. Yet, technocrats argue that government policies are implemented to negate the impact of aspects of modern society on the elderly. In view of such polarising perspectives, an in-depth introspection of the multidimensional aspect of modern society is required before a nuanced conclusion can be arrived at.

Modern society undermines the elderly as rising costs of living affect the retirement plans and healthcare costs of the elderly, creating unwanted economic pressure. As modern society progresses, our definition of items deemed as living essentials continue to expand, increasing the cost of living and undermining the retirement plans of many. The rise of the use of electricity in everyday use is an example that many can relate to. Nowadays, mobile phones, television and computers are considered essentials in the life of many, which was affirmed in the United Nations 2016 Summer resolution concretising the idea that access to the internet is a human right. As a result of the constantly expanding definition of necessities, the cost of living has been rising which undermines the elderly economically.

However, the above view holds a modicum of truth as there are institutional and government policies implemented to ensure financial capability of the elderly to cope with rising costs of services. Many countries implement a form of social security, providing the people with the necessary financial aid to comfortably live their golden years. Such policies are implemented in many forms and are known by a plethora of names. In America, social security ensures that no one would have to retire in relative poverty as seen from the provision of retirement benefits under the Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (OASDI) program. Similarly, the central provision fund in Singapore is a compulsory comprehensive savings and retirement plan which ensures that every Singaporean retirement needs are met and guaranteed. As such,

most of the worries and issues that the rising cost of living may bring are mitigated by such policies and actions.

Modern society also undermines the elderly as an increasing individualistic culture restricts the crucial social and community support the elderly needs, creating social enclaves. This is seen through the paradigm shift of the adoption of American individualistic culture across the world, due to the United State's role as the current world hegemon. The once strongly entrenched idea of filial piety in Chinese culture has lost its grip and is making way for the idea that one should not sacrifice personal happiness for others, which is a more hedonistic outlook in life. Coupled with the increasingly hectic and busy lifestyle created by modern society, the popularity of elder homes has increased, a trend which many traditionalists opine would undermine the welfare of the elderly as it restricts crucial social and community interaction. Hence, it can be said that modern society encourages increasing welfare concerns among the elderly.

Yet, it can be argued that modern society does not undermine the elderly as there are the provision of welfare and elderly-friendly communities to address the social support the elderly needs. The modern society has brought about the inception of the idea of actively aging whereby one should live one life to the fullest and that retirement itself provides the opportunity at a new lease of life. This is best illustrated in Singapore's Active Ageing Programmes (AAPs) which encourages seniors to stay active, healthy and socially engaged. These programmes are located in the neighbourhood, providing a wide range of unique and engaging activities, which helps encourage physical fitness and forging of communal bonds. As a result, such initiatives can only be borne from the shift in cultural perspectives that modern society has brought about, the creation of a more fulfilling life and the attainment of one personal goal.

Lastly, modern society undermines the elderly as the IT-inclined environment reveals the technological gap of the elderly so they are unable to function and interact with others effectively in society. This is best encompassed by the idea of a generation gap, where though it has existed before the emergence of modern society, it is the most prevalent in today's world. The prevalence of technology in our lives today has flipped the traditional social hierarchy around the world, where elders in the past were looked upon for their wisdom and guidance and yet in the contemporary world, they have to

look for their juniors to resolve anything technologically related. This is exacerbated by the rate of technological progression such as Singapore's shift to a cashless society starting with the ceasing of cash top-up services at passenger service centres at train stations in 2020, creating a technological hurdle and obstacle the elderly tries to reload their stored-valued travel card. This limits the elderly ability to function independently and effectively in society.

However, it can be argued that modern society does not undermine the elderly as the provision of media literacy and computing courses by the government address the technological gap of the elderly and allow them to effectively thrive in a digitalised age. The Singapore government has recognised the issue that technology is posing to the elderly and has reacted accordingly. With the introduction of initiatives such as the Silver IT Fest and the Digital Inclusion Fund, communities' centres around the island are providing courses and activities to help boost the literacy of the elderly population in Singapore. Hence, the image of technology as a harbinger of doom is just merely an image for the elderly population in Singapore.

In retrospect we can observe that modern society has influenced diverse aspects of the lives of the elderly. The extent that modern society undermines the elderly depends on the pace of modern life in that particular society and the rate of implementation of social and technological support schemes nationwide. For some elderly, the effective utilisation of institutional mechanisms to aid their daily living may realise that the disruption of aspects of modern society is limiting.