**GP Essays – Social Issues**

**Question 1**

How tolerant is your society of alternative views and lifestyles?

**Question 2**

How far is it acceptable for the public to mete out justice for wrongdoing?

(public vigilantism)

**Question 3**

How far is your society prepared for the challenges that diversity brings?

**Question 4**

To what extent do women in your society face discrimination?

Features of Social Issues

* The debate issues that will affect the way of life. The impacts come from the changes in values, behaviours and norms in society that will affect the society from a dimensional perspective
* Causes, effects and solutions – know how to apply these areas of discussion into the requirements of the question

EG - How tolerant is your society of alternative views and lifestyles?

Focus: responses to the alternative views and lifestyle / dimension of discussion (category)

How to write a good essay on social issues?

1. Types of question

1.1 Do you agree

1.2 Extent of Agreement

1.3 What is your view?

1.4 Discussion or Comment.

1. Requirements of the question
   1. What is the social issue
   2. What are the focuses
   3. How to answer the requirements of the question?

QN: How tolerant is your society of alternative views and lifestyles?

* **What they are willing to tolerate**
* **Why they are willing**
* **What are the areas they may not tolerate?**
* **Why they are unwilling?**
  1. How to link examples to your points?

Use examples to prove your points

1. Structure of discussion
   1. Based on the type of question
   2. Paragraph Development
   3. Development of causation
   4. Expression

**Question 1**

**How tolerant is your society of alternative views and lifestyles?**

Keywords

* ‘tolerant’ refers to the willingness to accept or put up with
* ‘alternative views’ refer to the different ideas and perspectives of individuals
* ‘alternative lifestyles’ refer to diverse way of life, such as habits, attitudes, beliefs, moral standards, gender identification and sexual orientation

Question Requirements

* ‘Extent of agreement’ (EOA) question
* Examine the impacts of alternative views and lifestyles on the society
* Focus on two opposing perspectives
  + Why society is not tolerant of alternative views and lifestyles
  + Why society is tolerant of alternative views and lifestyles

Introduction

**Overview:** In modern societies, the desire and attainment of progress of the human civilisation has shaped the views and lifestyles of individuals from different communities. After addressing the basic needs and concerns, humans began to consider adopting various lifestyles and accepting new perspectives to achieve fulfilling lives.

**Given View:** Some believe that the Singapore society has become more tolerant of alternative views and lifestyles as the city-state has progressed past the maturity stage to become more accepting towards differences amongst individuals, creating a melting pot that promotes tolerance and acceptance of diverse views.

**Contrasting View:** In contrast, others argue that Singapore remains intolerant of alternative views and lifestyles due to the conservative mindsets and behaviours of the majority that hamper the development of a liberal and receptive society.

**Approach:** In view of these polarising perspectives, this essay needs to **examine the various ways on how our diverse society interacts and develops from dimensional perspectives to derive the degree of tolerance of the society in view of a diverse society.**

Main Body

**Given View 1: Explain how Singapore is tolerant of alternative views and lifestyles - acceptance of alternative religious and cultural values**

**TS:** From the cultural and religious perspective, some argue that Singapore is a tolerant society as the government advocates multiculturalism and multi-religiosity, which have shaped the beliefs and behaviours of individuals to be more accepting towards diversity.

**EL:** Political leaders have stressed the importance of tolerance and mutual respect after learning from the historical lessons of ethnic clashes that threatened social fabric. As such, the continual emphasis on respect for diversity has been extended to other areas, like the acceptance of alternative views and lifestyles.

**EG:** Following the 1964 racial riots in Singapore, the government has focused its efforts on strengthening racial and religious harmony via legislative means, such as the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act and Sedition Act, which reinforce the importance of respecting religious and cultural diversity. Similarly, citizens from various ethnic communities are tolerant of customs, such as the Hungry Ghost Festival in which the Chinese burn paper offerings in metal bins located near residential areas.

**LS:** Hence, it is clear that the state-approved ideology of multiculturalism and multi-religiosity has been effective in creating a tolerant Singapore society towards differing views and lifestyles.

**Extent of Agreement 1: Explain how Singapore is not tolerant of alternative views and lifestyles - clash of cultural and religious values**

**TS:** However, such a view holds a limited perspective as the proliferation of religious values and beliefs have sparked off controversial debates that indicated the absence of tolerance towards ideas that deviate from personal beliefs.

**EL:** From the educational viewpoint, the imposition of a specific religious beliefs on the society has been met with strong rejection by the affected parties as they have perceived such actions as the infringement of personal space, particularly the clash of differing views.

**EG:** In 2014, a junior college student, Agatha Tan, published a letter to her school principal, expressing concerns over the a school workshop organised by pro-family Christian charity, Focus on the Family Singapore. Tan’s letter became viral on social media as many local netizens criticised the organiser for perpetuating sexism and gender stereotypes. In response, the Ministry of Education (MOE) ceased external vendor services for sexuality education workshops and emphasised that it would ensure the secularity of its learning curriculum.

**LS:** Hence, it can be observed that the society have different opinions on how our moral yardstick would be and may not see eye to eye on other alternative values while the government understands the significance of secular values.

**Given View 2: Explain how Singapore is tolerant of alternative views and lifestyles - acceptance of alternative family values and lifestyles**

**TS:** From the family perspective, some argue that the Singapore society is tolerant of alternative views and lifestyles as the proliferation of education amidst the modernised economy has led to the growing acceptance of diverse views amongst the population.

**EL:** Given that the Singapore government places economic development as the top priority, many Singaporeans share similar sentiments, seen in terms of pursuing formal education to improve employability. Furthermore, the openness of the Singapore economy to external influences has led to the influx of alternative views, in contrast to the traditional belief of marriages. Therefore, interaction between local and external views has led to the gradual acceptance towards other concepts of family.

**EG 1:** According to a 2016 General Household Survey, 70% of the Singapore residents in the mid to late 20s chose to remain single due to their focus on career development over marriage. Associate Professor Paulin Straughan of National University of Singapore (NUS) pointed out that there is strong pressure to perform in their jobs due to potential immediate rewards, like promotion. As such, some youths preferred singlehood over married life.

**EG 2:** In 2014, the National Library Board (NLB) withdrew two children’s books due to complaints from members of the public that these books could degrade family values. For instance, one of the two books, titled “And Tango Makes Three” featured two male penguins that behaved like a couple and raised a young. In response, the NLB saga sparked off social activism amongst some Singaporeans, including members of the arts community. Some commented that the books would have been a good opportunity to teach children diverse family structures, like single-parent families and same-sex couples.

**LS:** Therefore, this shows that Singapore has become more tolerant of alternative views and lifestyles pertaining to family.

**Extent of Agreement 2: Explain how Singapore is not tolerant of alternative views and lifestyles - resistance to alternative family values and lifestyles**

**TS:** However, such a view lacks depth as the Singapore society remained intolerant towards alternative family values that are deemed as threats to the traditional and conventional norms.

**EL:** Given that Singapore has been open to the effects of globalisation, the increasingly-educated population has been affected by influences that introduce alternative family values that deviate from traditional structures and lifestyle practices. As traditional values still remain the bedrock of societal beliefs, many individuals are hesitant in embracing diversity wholeheartedly.

**EG 1:** Following the landmark decision made by India’s supreme court to repeal Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code in September 2018, there were calls by individuals in Singapore to request the repeal of Section 377A of the Penal Code. In response, many religious organisations have publicly rejected the motion for repeal. For instance, the National Council of Churches of Singapore made a statement that the repeal may lead to the ‘normalisation and promotion’ of a morally-undesirable lifestyle. Also, there were two opposing camps that petitioned to repeal or keep the law.

**EG 2:** In 2014, Islamic religious teacher Noor Deros initiated a ‘Wear White’ online campaign that urged Muslims to don white-coloured clothing to protest against homosexuality and protect traditional family values. Deros’ campaign was organised in response to the ‘Pink Dot’ campaign, which advocated ‘the freedom to live’ regardless of sexual orientation. Clearly, the emergence of opposing camps that pushed for the preservation of pro-family values amongst the conservations and the liberal values by the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community has shown that lack of unanimity and tolerance.

**LS:** Therefore, such controversial debates have revealed the underlying perceptions of the public towards alternative family views and lifestyles that were deemed unacceptable, proving that the level of tolerance is minimal.

**Given View 3: Explain how Singapore is tolerant of alternative views and lifestyles - acceptance of alternative social values and lifestyles**

**TS:** From the social standpoint, Singapore may be increasingly tolerant of alternative social values as the changing demographic patterns of the society have shaped newer definitions of success and happiness.

**EL:** In particular, amongst the younger segment of the society, more individuals have diverged from the track of accepting and upholding traditional values, which are widely advocated by the older generations. As such, the youths have chose to discover their own purpose in life.

**EG:** During a parliamentary debate in May 2018, Senior Minister of State, Dr Maliki Osman shared his observation of Singaporean youths, pointing out that the millennials have developed their own definition of success. In contrast to the former definition of the Singaporean dream, which referred to the “5Cs - cash, car, credit card, condominium and country club membership”, youths are more appealed to the “You only live once (YOLO)” attitude as they prefer meaningful experiences than mere tangible material wants.

**LS:** Hence, the shifting focus of alternative social values amongst the youths have shown that the Singapore society is tolerant of diverse perspectives.

**Extent of agreement 3: Explain how Singapore is not tolerant of alternative views and lifestyles - rejection of alternative social values and lifestyles**

**TS:** However, alternative social values are not widely embraced by the older population in Singapore as the perceived incompatibility of the youths’ social values with the traditional beliefs have led to increased social dissatisfaction.

**EG:** According to an online survey conducted by job site Monster.com in July 2017, nearly one-third of young Singaporeans leave their first jobs in less than a year. The reasons for their departure include the lack of career progression and the desire for higher wage. In response to this problem of job-hopping amongst youths, employers expressed their concerns over this social behaviour as they found it unprofessional.

LS: Although the society has modernised, our core traditional values are still entrenched and forged to uphold the status quo on who we are and what we should be holding in a modern society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Singapore has built up a role model for many other cosmopolitan societies to emulate where we have attained racial harmony as we develop tolerance towards racial diversity. However, as society becomes more educated, globalization raises the degree of interaction and social media encourages freedom of expression, a more opined, individualistic and self-centred society evolves and complicates diversity and lower the tolerance towards other alternative views and lifestyles. As stated by Fareed Zakaria, ‘we are more tolerant of racial diversity than intellectual diversity.’ This speaks very clearly about the degree of tolerance Singapore has over alternative views and lifestyle.

**Question 2**

**How far is it acceptable for the public to mete out justice for wrongdoing?**

Keywords

* ‘Acceptable for the public’ implies whether the public should be allowed to act in this way?
* ‘Mete out justice for wrongdoing’ refers to the notion of public vigilantism → taking matters into your own hands → bypassing legal procedures or any form of state intervention

Question Requirements

* ‘How far’ refers to an ‘extent of agreement’ (EOA) question
* Examine the positive and negative implications of public vigilantism on the society → such as internet vigilantism

Introduction

Main Body

**Given View 1: Explain why it is acceptable for the public to mete out justice for wrongdoing - social - engage the individuals in our society to uphold the moral yardstick of the society**

**TS:** It is imperative for individuals to mete out justice for wrongdoing as their engagement will help to uphold the moral yardstick in building up a civic society.

**EL:**

**EG 1:** In January 2017, the Commercial Affairs Department (CAD) awarded 42 individuals in Singapore for assisting the police in crime prevention, such as impersonation scams. According to a press release, the police shared that several scams were thwarted through public intervention. Additionally, the police has encouraged the public to be vigilant and play an active role in crime prevention.

**EG 2:** In September 2018, a 28-year-old woman expressed her frustration over a molestation incident that took place at Serangoon MRT station. Although the victim sought assistance from a station control personnel, the personnel claimed that he was unable to apprehend the alleged perpetrator due to the need to stay at his post. Following the incident, Senior Minister Janil Puthucheary commented that MRT station employees are trained to call for help, not to chase after nor apprehend suspects.

**LS:** Hence, it is beneficial for the public to take the initiative to mete out justice for wrongdoing and maintain the moral yardstick, thus strengthening social stability.

**Rebuttal 1: Explain why it is not acceptable for the public to mete out justice for wrongdoing**

**TS:** However, such a view lacks depth as the implementation of online vigilantism through misconceived judgment leads to negative social implications.

**EL:** Inadequate and inaccurate information may exacerbate the problems as public are misled and undertake inappropriate actions to redress social injustice.

**EG 1:** In April 2018, a passer-by shared a video recording of an incident at a Tampines petrol station between a pump attendant and a driver on Facebook. The video became viral as the driver was alleged to have refused to pay $135 for his petrol because he had only requested to refill $10 worth of petrol. Netizens condemned the driver’s actions by publishing his personal details online, such as his mobile number and his usual parking locations. Fearing for his safety, the driver filed a police report.

**EG 2:** In April 2017, a video circulated on social media, involving an altercation between an elderly man and a couple at a Toa Payoh hawker centre. Netizens jumped to conclusion and identified the couple incorrectly, causing emotional distress for an innocent victim.

**LS:** As such, the negative social implications of online vigilantism show that it is not acceptable for the public to mete out justice for wrongdoing.

**Given View 2: Explain why it is acceptable for the public to mete out justice for wrongdoing - political**

**TS:**

**EL:**

**EG:** As part of the SGSecure national movement, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) launched the SGSecure mobile app in 2016 to encourage members of the public to provide and receive information pertaining to terrorist attacks or other major emergencies. Furthermore, the SGSecure@Workplaces programme began in 2017 to prepare individuals at workplaces for potential attacks. For example, the staff at the management level will be given the role to be the companies’ point of contact with the authorities during an emergency.

**LS:**

**Rebuttal 2: Explain why it is not acceptable for the public to mete out justice for wrongdoing**

**TS:**

**EL:**

**EG:** In March 2018, the Parliament approved the Communications Stop Order (CSO) legislation, in which members of the public in the vicinity of a ‘serious incident’, like a terrorist attack, are not allowed to take or share pictures or videos. The purpose is to minimise terrorists’ access to information, which may undermine the effectiveness of law enforcement operations.

**LS:**

Conclusion