



NANYANG JUNIOR COLLEGE

JC2 PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION 2024

GENERAL PAPER

8881/02

PAPER 2:

Monday 26 August 2024

INSERT

1 hour 30 minutes

READ THIS INSTRUCTION FIRST

This insert contains the passages for Paper 2.

Passage 1: *An author writes about the paradox of voluntourism.*

- 1 Every year, a staggering 10 million international travellers, typically from North America and Europe, travel abroad to volunteer in impoverished communities. Students, youth groups, and other well-intended participants construct buildings, assist at orphanages, and pursue other short-term development projects in an effort to give back. Yet, to what extent do these volunteers actually benefit host communities, economically and socially? 5

- 2 As a \$2 billion industry, voluntourism is one of the fastest growing trends in travel. Volunteer agencies advertise these short-term mission trips as an opportunity for participants to broaden their worldview and put their altruistic desires into action. While these trips may provide participants with life-changing experiences (that their Instagram and Facebook followers resoundingly applaud), the opposite is often observed in the communities impacted. Rather, voluntourism is imperialistic in nature. It economically disenfranchises local communities, creates relationships dependent on aid reliance, inefficiently manages resources and reinforces harmful stereotypes. 10

- 3 The imperialistic nature of voluntourism is apparent in the disempowerment of the communities they aim to help. While volunteers often have good intentions to improve the lives of the locals, the voluntourism industry sustains practices that hinder local economies. When local enterprises hire local workers to complete development projects, they pay for labour, resulting in local employment. However, when agencies recruit volunteers who are willing to pay to complete these same projects, it deprives local workers of job opportunities, and local enterprises are also denied business opportunities. 15
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- 4 A pressing matter triggered by voluntourism on the medical front is the illusory sense of protection and consistency in such services. Newsweek columnist Maya Wesby describes a situation in Ghana where locals were at the mercy of the volunteers' availability to dispense medication and medical advice. This free care caused many to opt out of medical insurance, mortally wounding local healthcare and insurance providers, and condemning the locals to a woeful dependence on foreigners. If there were to be any interruption to volunteer arrivals (say, a pandemic), locals would truly be left in the lurch. As these trips are designed for the short-term, participants do not recognise the harm they are imposing on communities over time. 25

- 5 Additionally, in terms of economically benefiting host communities, voluntourism is incredibly inefficient in managing the expenses paid by participants. While volunteer agencies often advertise a desperate need for volunteers, costs for these programmes are far from cheap, depending on the programme's duration. However, while participants are committing a large sum of money towards these altruistic efforts, only about 18% of funds raised are allocated to the recipient community, while the other 82% is put towards travel expenses. While this provides minimal benefit for the host community, it provides a larger benefit for both the participant and voluntourism industry. 30
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- 6 Socially, voluntourism programmes provide both participants and local community members with a stereotyped, flawed sense of reality. The design of these programmes perpetuates white saviourism, the problematic idea that minority communities must depend on white individuals to be 'saved'. As international volunteers typically go abroad for a week or two, they often pursue low-skilled tasks, such as basic construction, distributing food or tutoring children. Therefore, the ability for volunteers to make a valuable difference is limited. However, when unskilled white volunteers travel abroad to perform basic tasks, this promotes the toxic belief that locals cannot complete basic tasks themselves. Not only do locals develop a false sense of inferiority, but the volunteers develop a false sense of superiority, believing that locals are helpless without their assistance. Without recognising that these programmes have little humanitarian purpose, and are largely designed to benefit them, participants develop a flawed, dangerous perception of the developing world. 40
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Passage 2: *An author writes about the positive effects of voluntourism on local communities.*

- 1 Young participants who engage in voluntourism positively impact the local communities being served. Voluntourism programmes connect the participants to the communities that are in need. Judith Lopez, director of an orphanage centre, talks about how the children in the institution — some abandoned and others underprivileged — are getting the affection and reassurance they need from the voluntourists who visit the facility. She talks about how the children are enthusiastic about spending their time with the volunteers. These passionate students, hailing from reputed American universities, spend their breaks at such facilities to build libraries, tutor children, grow plantations, and take up several leadership positions to make the community and its members who warmly welcome the students, thrive. Moreover, with the aid of tourism firms, voluntourists are able to engender sustained economic self-sufficiency among the community members by leveraging their skills and providing employment opportunities to them. For instance, the Planeterra Foundation is investing in empowering the Ccaccacollo community in Peru by organising weaving workshops for the women, which allows them to support their families by selling these textiles to the tourists and also teaching them some of the weaving skills. Overall, by touching every part of the community and empowering them, young voluntourists are giving communities their share of gratification. 5 10 15
- 2 Service follows enlightenment. Giving back to the local communities abroad is a great way for the volunteers to also acquire a better understanding of the lives of the underprivileged which plays a key role in helping them become more emotionally aware, attain a high level of civil-mindedness, and pave the path to envision solutions for big problems such as poverty and lack of other necessities. Overall, voluntourism is a win-win for all the stakeholders involved and develops the student volunteers on an interpersonal level. 20
- 3 In addition to the core impacts on the stakeholders involved in voluntourism, voluntourists also take the credit for preserving the natural environment of the places they tour and volunteer. With constant efforts to preserve or leverage the cultural heritage present in the communities and merging volunteer work with eco-tourism, these programmes are essentially augmenting the economic value of such places. 25

Passage 3: *An author writes about the dangers of voluntourism.*

- 1 The rapidly growing industry of voluntourism markets itself as a seamless blend of charity and leisure. Organising trips for over 10 million people annually, voluntourism agencies reap billions from their clients' good intentions. The seemingly benevolent nature of the activity has made it a top choice extracurricular activity for students who can afford it.
- 2 Unfortunately, most participants are blind to its disturbing consequences. In the words of a New York Times article, voluntourists assume that "simply by being privileged enough to travel the world", they "are somehow qualified to help ease the world's ills". 5
- 3 The idea that voluntourism is based in egotism, not altruism, may be a tough pill to swallow. But voluntourists' actions are often fruitless due to the volunteers' limited involvement and expertise. Put bluntly, many of these trips serve no purpose other than to pad resumes and fuel social media posts. It is up to universities, at whom much of this business is aimed, to point out explicitly how superficial — or downright detrimental — these efforts can be. 10
- 4 Voluntourism implicitly teaches students to develop a 'white saviour' complex toward the regions they visit. More insidiously, residents of host communities can become dependent on foreign influence — financial influence, that is, because none of the voluntourists' other impacts typically last longer than their trip. As Pippa Biddle illustrates in the book, 'Ours To Explore', once one group "[finishes] building bathrooms at a local school and [leaves] for home, the structures [will be] demolished to make way for a new project, built by a fresh set of volunteers". She even documented how children in Uganda learned to "rub dirt on themselves before running toward arriving volunteers". 15 20