**GP Model Essay - Modern Society**

**The competitive ethos in society is never beneficial to the people today. Discuss**

A competitive ethos has been embedded in the cultural psyche of modern society, expanding its outreach into diverse aspects of our life. It is commonly perceived as both an inevitable product of capitalism and the bedrock of modern society. Consequently, debates emerge about the benefits of such competitive spirits on modern individuals. Economists argue that the competitive ethos is beneficial as it creates better productivity in individuals. Yet others oppose such a view as a competitive ethos manifests widespread inequality and moral decadence, resulting in the disproportionate treatment of individuals. In view of such contrasting perspectives, this essay aims to take a multidimensional evaluation and exploration of the impacts of the competitive ethos of society on individuals to derive a nuanced assessment of the issue.

 The inception of the competitive ethos was borne from economic needs and it thus appropriate that we start approaching it from an economic perspective. From this perspective, a competitive ethos is not beneficial to the people today as it fuels widespread wealth and income inequality among modern individuals. The competitive ethos has spawned a culture of making everything a zero-sum game, where to be successful in this modern society, one must exploit others. This culture has created the environment whereby the increasing severity of such income inequality on an individual, national and even international level has resulted in vigorous academic debate with the emergence of new nomenclature that gave Occupy Wall Street its vocabulary. This is seen in many statistics from the fact that the pay for Chief Executive Officer compensation has risen by 1008% vis-a-vis 11.9% of the average worker since 1978. It is absurd that CEOs today now make 278 times the average worker, with the former living in unimaginable luxury while the latter must live from paycheck to paycheck. Hence, the competitive ethos is increasingly not beneficial from an individual’s economic perspective.

However, such a view holds a modicum of truth as a competitive ethos in a globalised landscape can raise efficiency to induce economic activities, providing economic opportunities for growth and development. This can be seen in the formation and the creation of the global economy and the New International Division of Labour (NIDL), where the countries leverage on their strengths to maximise their production. Simply put, it describes the increasing specialisation on a global level, where substantial economies of scale can be achieved due to the massive scale of production. This is best exemplified in the creation of an Iphone, where the research is done in America, the fabrication of the microprocessor is done in Taiwan and the assembly and provision of raw materials is done in China. Such processes have helped promote economic growth and development which was the bedrock of the economic miracle that China had experienced after they had opened their economy in 1978. It is thus undeniable that the competitive ethos had led to greater economic growth and development.

Exploring the moral angle, a competitive ethos is not beneficial to people as it coerces individuals to engage in morally corrupt actions to gain an advantage over others, undermining the development of a civic society with integrity. The competitive ethos had advanced the mindset that the end justifies its means. This can be seen by the increase in the occurrence of scams, Ponzi schemes and false advertising. This was especially prevalent during the Covid-19 pandemic, where there was rapid digitalisation at an unprecedented pace. The Cyber Agency of Singapore saw a near doubling of ransomware cases from January to October in the year 2020, from 35 cases to 60 cases. This signals the degradation of a civic society, where more and more people are tempted by the easy cash grab at the expense of the hardworking average joe. Hence, the competitive ethos has led to the degradation of morals and the disintegration of the social contract.

Yet, it can be argued that a competitive ethos is beneficial to people as individuals are deeply ingrained in their moral values and retain their innate sense of humanity in the pursuit of their aims. It is still an irrefutable fact that we are sentient creatures and that we have our own free will. The competitive ethos that we experience can also be used as a tool to fuel noble pursuits such as charitable acts of kindness. This is seen in the ALS ice bucket challenge, where the 2014 viral sensation garners 220 million USD hinged on the competitive ethos of people to outdo one another. This brought about much needed awareness and funds to such a devastating and criminally unknown malady. Hence, the competitive ethos can be no doubt beneficial when it drives people to further autristic and noble goals.

Finally, from a psychological perspective, a competitive ethos in society is not beneficial to people as it increases stress levels and anxiety in individuals, a paramount symptom of our fast-paced society. The constant hustle and bustle of modern society has become an accepted fact, with many knowingly or unknowingly letting many become swallowed up by this hectic pace of life. This is seen in the phenomenon of increasing numbers of Hikikomoris in Japan as the increasing pressures in life of the competitive modern society has led these people to seek extreme degrees of social isolation and confinement. Therefore, the presence of the competitive ethos leads to increased stress levels and anxiety, culminating in the total withdrawal from society.

However, it can be argued that a competitive ethos is beneficial to individuals as they find healthy means to destress while viewing competition as a test for their character. Using the competitive culture as a positive force can help strengthen the mental fortitude of individuals, enabling them to survive the treacherous nature of the world. Individuals see competition as the source of motivation that pushes individuals and the society for betterment. It is through competition one can build on their strengths and discover their weaknesses to strive for improvement. The old adage, no competition, no progress really applies and it is therefore the source of success. As stated by Bill Gates, ‘Innovation is the most powerful force to change the world’, and we strive for this development.

In retrospect, we can see that a competitive ethos has influenced diverse aspects of the lives of modern individuals. The extent of benefit to people today will then depend on the pace of modern life in a particular society and how humans adapt to such a competitive societal psyche. In the process of integration, individuals may find that a competitive ethos in society provides greater opportunity in life.