

Why should fast fashion be curtailed in today's society?

Xinyi Huang

When you walk into the mall and see fashionable clothes neatly displayed on the hangers. As the desire to shop soars, you are also hesitating about whether the price of the clothes will exceed expectations. After you pick the clothing of your choice, you nervously flip the price tag and are fascinated to find that the price of the dress is affordable. How could these clothes have both attractive designs and prices? Fast fashion makes customers buy the latest trendy clothing at a very low price because of its fast and inexpensive mass production. This marketing method grew during the late 20th century as the manufacturing of clothing became less expensive. Fast fashion must be curtailed in today's society because it has a significant negative impact on the human rights of workers, including poor working conditions, unjustified treatment, and even child labor restricting children's fundamental rights.

Fast fashion pursues efficient production and cheap labor, therefore sweatshops have become a common choice for companies. Terrible working conditions in sweatshops have become a threat to the human rights of workers. The working environment in the sweatshops was always hostile. Workers need to work without enough ventilation for hours. During these hours, they must endure the noise from the machines, high temperatures in confined spaces, and repetitive motion. Due to the lack of air circulation in factories, workers inevitably encounter harmful chemicals when producing garments. These chemicals can seriously affect workers' bodies as they accumulate over time. According to research from California State University, "around 27 million workers in fashion supply chains worldwide are suffering from work-related illnesses and diseases." ("Poor Health & Safety In The Fashion Industry", 2018) Besides the environment, safety hazards of the factory are also a threat to workers. To save money, it is a common practice for sweatshop builders to cut corners in the construction. The most tragic disaster in the history of the garment factory occurred "In 2013, a garment factory in Dhaka, Bangladesh collapsed, killing more than 1,100 workers and injuring many more." ("Collapse at Rana Plaza - Ethics

Unwrapped", 2021) These casualty statistics make sweatshop workers work in fear day and night. The poor working conditions in the end will cause workers to suffer from physical illness. However, working in such a difficult environment did not result in a high income. Instead, workers in sweatshops were treated unfairly.

Almost all the fast fashion clothing on the market is produced in third-world countries. In these countries manufacturing costs are low and labor laws are lenient, therefore workers in the factories were being exploited and treated unjustly. To buy the food they rely on to sustain their families, they must work in sweatshops. It was the only simple job they could find that did not require a level of education. These garment workers don't want to lose this hard-earned job, so they are forced to endure injustice at work. They work more than sixteen hours of work a day and end up costing only a few dollars a week. In the worst cases, "sweatshop workers are forced to work as much as 72 hours without sleep, and the hourly wage can be as low as under 20 cents." (Rosalez, 2022) The majority of garment workers in sweatshops are usually women. According to Alex Assoune: "Women especially are the victims of fast fashion as they are subject to daily violence based on their gender." (Assoune, 2023) Many female workers are treated unequally in the factory. They are often subjected to harassment and violence, and sometimes even physical abuse from the factories' supervisors. This makes them feel stressed and anxious. But they are afraid to resist the harassment, which would result in them losing their jobs and source of income. The sweatshops that resulted from fast fashion subjected workers to inhumane treatment. They disregard the human rights of workers, especially women, and treat them as work machines to be exploited. The race for profit engendered by fast fashion pushes companies to find ever-cheaper sources of labor. They have found an easier target to exploit: children.

To save money, many fast fashion companies use child labor in the factories which is forbidden by law in most countries but still exists in some third-world countries. The International Labour Organization estimates that "there are around 170 million children aged between five and seventeen years old in child labor, almost 17% of the global population of children." (ILO, 2021) Some fast fashion companies have taken advantage of the legal loopholes in these countries to hire child laborers to produce clothing. In poverty areas, parents consider children working to be

standard, so they send children to sweatshops to earn a meager salary to supplement their families. This decision deprived children of their right to education and a normal childhood. Compared to adults, children can suffer more serious injuries in bad working conditions. The chemicals produced in the factories and abuse by the supervisors will result in long-term health problems. Fast fashion has dragged these poor families into a vicious cycle, “If parents have no education they will end up in low-paid work; their children will be forced to work, they will miss out on their education, and they too will end up in low-paid work as adults.”(Ovaa, 2019) It shows that besides the misfortune that child labor brings to the workers themselves, it is also passed on to generations. Fortunately, customers are gradually starting to realize the dangers of fast fashion and are beginning to make changes.

In conclusion, the fast fashion industry has seriously violated workers' rights in third-world countries which must be curtailed in today's society. Its negative impacts can be shown in poor working conditions, unjustified treatment, and child labor. The quest for efficient production and low labor costs eventually leads to the exploitation of workers. Fast fashion companies should realize that their unethical decisions and focus on profit-seeking will only lead to more casualties. Companies should provide better trading conditions and ensure workers' rights to promote sustainable development. Luckily, fast fashion problems were being discovered. Consumers are beginning to realize the negative effects of fast fashion, and more and more people are boycotting fast fashion products. As general consumers, we should respect the rights of workers and support fair trade and sustainable products.

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