

Fashion industry : Labour behind the labor

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ABSTRACT

The fashion industry has complex connections to many fields, including manufacturing, advertising, and production of raw materials, transportation and retailing. The tremendous profits that stand to be made in the fashion industry create the temptation to engage in unethical behavior. When producers, manufacturers, models or consumers are being exploited or treated unfairly, fashion executives have an ethical responsibility to change the situation. Many fashionable clothes are manufactured by poorly paid people in developing countries. This practice, known as sweatshop labor, has come under major scrutiny and has been condemned by a wide range of critics. Particularly concerning low wages and long hours, unhealthy and unsafe working conditions, exhaustion, sexual harassment and mental stress are some of these issues. Due to consumer consciousness and disasters which occurred in recent years such as factory building that collapsed in Bangladesh killing more than 1,000 workers, many companies and fashion brands are turning towards sustainable and ethical fashion such as Patagonia, GAP. In this review paper, the condition of labor in relation to sweatshops, working hours, and working conditions, Freedom of association, wages, health and safety has been discussed.

Key Words : Fashion industry, Sweatshops, Health and safety, Wages

INTRODUCTION

The \$450 billion global fashion industry is one of the most important sectors of the global economy that creates jobs and clothes for people all over the world. It employs over 25 million workers in over 100 countries. The reality of this industry is that many individual producers in the developing countries make the labor work for long hours under strenuous conditions for pennies on the dollar, far less than a living wage (7). Due to lack of education, lack of awareness about the hazards of their occupations, general backwardness in sanitation, poor nutrition and proneness to epidemics aggravate their health hazards from work environment (2). "The fashion industry has designed a system that allows companies to easily move from country to country, from continent to continent, whenever there is an opportunity to cut costs," says a Democratic staffer with the U.S. House Education and the Workforce Committee, who has worked on legislation addressing issues in supply chains of retailers. "Factories in the supply chain are pressured by this global race to the bottom, and, to remain competitive, far too often compromise basic labor rights by abiding poor health and safety conditions, engaging in

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