

Sweatshops analysis

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There are both cons and pros when it comes to sweatshops and being a company that follows the model of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Understanding what sweatshops are and how they operate, we should look back at history when the term was first used. According to Jimenez et al. (2016), “the term was first used in association with the manufacture of articles of clothing and apparel. Shortly after the beginning of the industrial revolution, this began in the United Kingdom at the end of eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth (para.5).” manufacturing labor become more prominent to help coincide with new technologies being introduced. This term however implicates how poorly employees are treated in manufacturing jobs, specifically in the textiles and apparel industry due to unsafe conditions, labor abuse, and employment of children, mandatory overtime, and other negligence as well (Jimenez et al., 2016, para.5). Sweatshops are mostly observed has a negative side to cheaper labor overseas because of how factories violate and abuse laborers and their working conditions. The cons of companies facilitating sweatshops are past history disasters with factories enabling sweatshops. For example the triangle shirtwaist fire factory that occur in New York City. “On March 25, 1911, a fire broke out in the Triangle Shirtwaist Company factory located next to Washington Square Park (Jimenez et al., 2016). Working in conditions that made it impossible to safely escape the fire, many garment workers fell to their death from the eight floor of the building. It was considered to be one of the worst industrial accidents in the history of the United States. Another recent case was in Bangladesh. “On April 24, 2013, at Rana Plaza on the outskirts of Dhaka, Bangladesh, a building containing apparel factories collapsed, trapping and killing over 1,100 employees. It was not only the worst industrial disaster in the history of the garment industry; it was also the world’s most fatal industrial building collapse (Jimenez et al., 2016).” These incidents showcase how sweatshops can become a dangerous and hazard environment for labor workers to be

subjected to. Another disadvantage of sweatshops are that many labor workers are unionized, this means that labor workers can collectively choose to walk off the job if they are met with harsh working conditions or low pay wages. For example, in 1909 many garment workers formed a strike against their employers due to these sweatshops conditions in New York City and it had formed over 20,000 workers, this was called “uprising of the 20,000.” And now there are many unions dedicated to ensure the safety of these sweatshops. Over the years, there were many reforms dedicated to stop sweatshop conditions from happening. An organization like the International Labor Organization formed in 1919, to protect workers right and in 1937 the United States introduced an important national law on union and labor constitutional rights, called the National Labor Relations Act to battle sweatshop goings-on in factories.

However there is a flip side to the usage of sweatshops that can be seen as beneficial for a company and be considered globalization. Positive aspects of sweatshops can be viewed as benefit to a native economy by having worldwide outsourced. Employment in a developing country would grow and help the economy grow as well. According to Heintz (2004), “The lack of attention to the need to provide more job opportunities in poor countries has frequently been a short-coming of the anti-sweatshop movement. The focus is almost exclusively on wages and working conditions. However, this narrow focus can backfire. Efforts to improve labor standards can have unintended consequences if retailers and multinational brand-name corporations simply source from different suppliers with lower labor costs (pg.224).” this problem can be a rebound for the anti-sweat shop movement, who advocate for labor workers to have a decent wage. In a report by Consortium n.d. (2001) “jobs in garment factories, no matter how low the wages or how difficult the conditions, benefit low-skilled workers because they provide better conditions and compensation than jobs in the informal and agricultural sectors of developing countries.

Moreover, they posit, export-apparel manufacturing offers these workers—and, by extension, developing countries—a “route out of poverty” through the expansion of the manufacturing sector. This report makes the point that these garment workers are better off working in sweatshops because it’s a better option than the farming segment in emerging countries.

Both arguments for and against sweatshop activity have valid points, however there is no moral argument for the exploitation of labor workers due to sweatshops. The negative sides of sweatshop activity outweigh any support for its presence in factories because it’s morally wrong to defend. Businesses that deal with corporate social responsibility are self-regulating markets that is a win-win for both employers and employee. This model is also similar to that of fair trade. Fair trade is another source of labor that helps employees from impoverished countries to receive good benefits and a decent wage by working with developed countries in exchange for goods, labor and manufacturing. According to Jimenez et al. (2016), “At its broadest level, fair trade can be seen as an initiative of the developed world to reward principled production in the developing world. More specifically, fair trade operates primarily as a certification system under which qualified producers (who follow certain environmental and labor standards) are guaranteed a minimum price for their production (para.1).” However companies that engage in this business model often employ workers in conditions not suitable for work and violate labor injustices. One other factor to add to the anti-sweatshop movement is that sweatshops are grounds for exploitation of labor workers. In an article discussing the Exploitation and Third World Sweatshops, Meyers (2004) mentions, “The sweatshop label can still apply to jobs that do not involve any of these more obvious moral atrocities. A difficult job with long hours that pays very little may still be referred to as a sweatshop job and may still be morally objectionable. One reason why exploitative benefiting is overlooked is that paradigm cases of exploitation involve

some kind of deception, or at least manipulation, and typically involve some loss or detriment to the exploited, harm or a violation of rights (pg. 1). This type of benefiting from owners and employers do harm to workers of their pay. Even though most labor workers are from poor communities in different parts of the world where multinational businesses are present and are willing to be subjected to harsh conditions and low wages doesn't mean it makes it morally comprehensible. Meyer further states, "The free market principles at best only indicate that the sweatshop workers are benefited from these jobs despite the low wages, but obviously the fact that someone is benefited does not necessarily prove that she is not wronged (pg. 5). These unfair treatments to workers should be held more accountable by corporations using sweatshops because it's a moral obligation.



References

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