



ELICITING MILLENNIAL PERSPECTIVES ON ETHICAL PRACTICES AND MORAL CONDUCT WITHIN THE APPAREL INDUSTRY

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Abstract:

The 21st century consumers are mindful of problems that impact social and environmental sustainability, fast fashion's main emphasis is faster turnaround from factories to stay competitive thus some retail companies aren't paying keen attention on the ethics in apparel production factories (Bhasin, 2014, June 04; Tan, 2016). According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) forced labor is a worldwide concern affecting 21 million people; simply put there are 3 out of every 1,000 victims who are part of forced labor within Asia-Pacific with 11.7 million and other regions as shown in Appendix A (McClelland, 2017). 260 million children partake in employment with an estimate of 170 million children engaged in apparel making; ILO estimated that 6 million children are in forced labor with 14 to 16 working hour days in poor working conditions with reported cases in Bangladesh apparel factories; yarn spinning in India; cotton seeds production in Benin; and harvesting cotton in Uzbekistan (Moulds, 2017; Peiris, 2005). Ashridge Centre for Business and Sustainability, and Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) confirmed that 71% of companies admitted to cases of modern slavery in their supply chain; with 168 million child labor cases in 2017 and a proven improvement from 246 million cases in 2000 (McClelland, 2017). Can apparel suppliers and retailers tackle the unethical practices that are impacting humanity and integrate practices that would ensure social sustainability? The focus of this research was for an opportunity to acquire and understand millennials perspectives on the unethical conduct and fashion industry with relevance to apparel sourcing, manufacturing, industry sustainability.

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1. Introduction

Global apparel industry is estimated at \$1.2 trillion with an average household spending \$1786 yearly on apparel and apparel related services; research conducted by the University of Delaware Career Service Center confirmed that the United States (U.S.) apparel industry generates \$250 billion yearly; the pressure to remain competitive has contributed to unethical practices such as worker safety, unfair pay rates, and impact on social sustainability (Cross, 2017; Tan, 2016). Ashridge Centre for Business and Sustainability, and Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) confirmed that 71% of companies admitted to cases of modern slavery in their supply chain; with 168 million child labor cases in 2017 and a proven improvement from 246 million cases in 2000 (McClelland, 2017). Consumers mindfulness of environmental and social problems in the apparel industries was evidence in the trickle down of profits; Goldman Sachs August 2005 report confirmed industry leaders in social, governance, and environmental outperformed competitors by 72% and stock market by 25% with ethical spending increasing by 26% between 2004 and 2005 (Duraismy, 2017; Hamnett, 2008).

Apparel industry fashions like Forever 21, Zara, Adidas, Gap among others no longer just make apparel for 4 times (seasons) a year but 11 or 15 times and are now considered as “fast fashion” with industries mass producing more styles thus making them more affordable and attractive for consumers to make purchases (Hamnett, 2008; Tan, 2016). The revolving door of new fashion trends contributes to consumers urge to look for bargains thus forcing the apparel industry to seek and produce goods at the cheapest rates (Greenhouse, 2000). Fast fashion’s main emphasis is faster turnaround from factories to stay competitive thus; some retail companies aren’t paying keen attention on the ethics in apparel production factories (Bhasin, 2014, June 04; Tan, 2016). The American apparel industry have sought out the ever-cheaper labor for production in global markets such as Latin America; Asia; Bangladesh; Honduras; Hong Kong; and India among others (Greenhouse, 2000). The companies that have sought out the cheap labor include Gap; Wal-Mart; H&M; Tommy Hilfiger; Esprit; Lee; J.C. Penny; Wrangler; Nike among others; the attractive apparel factories in global platforms include Bangladesh with 5000 factories that employ 3.2 million workers and 80% of the \$24

billion in exports is from garments (Cline, 2013; Montopoli, 2013; Paul & Mukherjee, 2016; Watkins & Ahmed, 2013).

Overseas apparel industries have been associated with unethical practices that include child labor; low wages; health and safety risks; environmental degradation; animal cruelty; and 80% apparel workers not receiving mandated health benefits as confirmed by Labor Link survey (Greenhouse, 2000; Holland, 2013). The paid low wages aren't sufficient to feed families; apparel manufacturing adding toxic compounds and heavy metals into water to help dyes cling into inorganic fabric creating pollution into ocean, lakes, rivers; direct exposure and working with harsh chemicals; poor ventilation thus factory space is filled with chemicals; cases of management in factories refusing employees in need of medical attention to vacate the premises; and even reported cases of hitting of workers (Cross, 2017; Greenhouse, 2000) (Holland, 2013). Other unethical practices in the apparel industry include animal cruelty affecting over 50 million animals; 1980 established organization that fights for animal's rights People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) is an activism for animal rights (Gardetti, 2016).

The unethical practices in the global markets have also included factories in Honduras hiring children under 14 years of age; Indonesia management squashing any efforts for labor unionization, China using child labor and prison labor (Greenhouse, 2000). Per the International Labour Organisation (ILO) forced labor is a worldwide concern affecting 21 million people; simply put there are 3 out of every 1,000 victims who are part of forced labor within Asia-Pacific with 11.7 million and other regions as shown in Appendix A (McClelland, 2017). Additionally, the Business and Human Rights Resources (BHRRC) research reported an estimate 250, 000 to 400, 000 illegal Syrian refugees' exploitation in 28 to 38 garment factories in Turkey; brands such as New Look and NEXT are taking measures in addressing the exploitation of refugees in the apparel supply chain (McClelland, 2017).

Forced labor in form of Child labor is prohibited in most countries but still exists today in some of the poverty-stricken countries in the world; ILO reported that around 260 million children partake in employment with an estimate of 170 million children engaged in apparel making to meet demands of Western companies in the U. S. and Europe among others (Cross, 2017; Greenhouse, 2000; Moulds, 2017). ILO estimated that 6 million children are in forced labor with 14 to 16 working hour days in poor working conditions with reported cases in Bangladesh apparel factories; yarn spinning in India; cotton seeds production in Benin; and harvesting cotton in Uzbekistan (Moulds, 2017; Peiris, 2005). Specifically, children are deemed suitable for tasks such as sowing cotton seeds, pollen transfer in cotton farming, and harvest delicate crops like

cotton among others (Moulds, 2017). Additionally, 60% children work in the spinning mills and yarn factories in India; children under 18 years of age have also been reported to work in the “cut-make-trim” stage in apparel making; embroidering; smocking (making pleats); and sequinning (McClelland, 2017; Moulds, 2017). To address child labor in Bangladesh; the signed agreement by Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exports Association (BGMEA), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and International Labor Organization in 1995 was to cease the use of child labor; Bangladesh has over 6.3 million children who work because of the parents’ inability to support and feed them (Dharmasena, 2000).

Focusing on Bangladesh as an example, Bangladesh has history of fire catastrophes; the apparel industries in Bangladesh are susceptible to fires because of the low to no regulation on safety standards (CBC News, 2010, February 26). The pressure to meet scheduled deadlines given by Western companies is part of what contributed to Rana Plaza Bangladesh workers being beaten to continue working when the building was cracking and later collapsed killing over 1, 134 workers (Gearhart, 2015, October 06; McClelland, 2017; Yardley, 2013). Apparel retail industries were faced with backlash from consumers who made noise for the human labor abuse, animal abuse and natural resource in association with the Rana Plaza building collapse; the incident led to activists and the individuals to protest the unethical fashion (Gardetti, 2016). Additionally, media sources also called out retailers like Wal-Mart, Gap, H&M, The Childrens Place and Joe Fresh among others for taking advantage of poverty stricken areas to produce fast fashion clothes unethically without taking measures in safety and child labor in their sourcing to apparel factories and making minimal progress in addressing the factories that produce their apparel (Bruculieri, 2015; Greenhouse, 2000).

The 21st century consumers are mindful of problems that impact social and environmental sustainability thus contributing to ample of consumers and activists vocalizing their concerns to industries on what needs to occur for their reputation and survival in the industry (Collins, 2014; Hamnett, 2008). Locating clothing that are ethically produced while adhering to Fair Labor Standards can be problematic as the fast-fashion industries and common stores such as Wal-Mart and Costco selling \$5.00 or less T-shirts (Holland, 2013). American Universities that included New York University; Georgetown; Duke; University of Pennsylvania; University of Washington State-Seattle; Cornell; Michigan; Penn-State; University of Wisconsin-Madison; and Columbia among others agreement with licensees that production of apparel bearing University logos had to be done by programs that the University saw fit to call on efforts to address

ethical practices in apparel industry thus signing the Bangladesh Safety Accord (Dawisha, 2014; Greenhouse & Harris, 2014).

The addressing of unethical conduct in the apparel industry is openly discussed by manufacturers and retailers but the number of companies that put their words into actions are limited and the companies are reluctant to spend the money (McClelland, 2017). Can apparel suppliers and retailers tackle the unethical practices that are impacting humanity and integrate practices that would ensure social sustainability? The focus of this research was for an opportunity to acquire and understand millennials perspectives on the unethical conduct and fashion industry with relevance to apparel sourcing, manufacturing, industry sustainability. The millennials were important to understand in ethics and apparel industry because millennials are projected by Fortune to dominate the workforce by 2020 (Hyder, 2016); additionally, Accenture research confirmed that the 80 million millennials in U.S. spend \$600 billion yearly and are projected to spend up to \$1.4 trillion by 2020 with 30% in retail sales (Accenture, 2017; Schawbel, 2015).

2. Literature Analysis

World largest apparel industries labor wages as confirmed by Jassin-O'Rourke Group include Bangladesh at \$.22 per hour; Vietnam at \$.38; Cambodia at \$.33; Pakistan at \$.37; Sri Lanka at \$.43; Indonesia at \$.44; India at \$.51; China at \$.86; Philippines at \$1.07; and Malaysia at \$ 1.18 (Perera, 2010). Bangladesh with reported history of political turbulence and corruption has a population was at 159.9 million in 2016 (see Appendix B) with half of the people living under poverty line on less than \$2 per day and 40% live on \$1.25 per day with an unemployment rate of 4.1 in (Appendix C) and detailed specifics in Appendix D (Greenhouse & Harris, 2014; Montero, 2005; Powell, 2014; Trading Economics.com, 2017). Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries in the world as reported by the Huffington Post with cheap labor, fiscal support that includes faster exports, and duty-free import of accessories and fabric (Mustafa, 2013; Paul & Mukherjee, 2016; Peiris, 2005). The Bangladesh apparel industry shipped US\$38.6 billion goods in 2016 with an increase of 148.1% since 2009 and top 10 exports (see Appendix E) (Workman, 2017). Bangladesh has over 4 million workers and have increased over the years since 1985 (see Appendix F); the main attraction to the Bangladesh market is linked to the skilled cheap labor; the Asian-American Free Labor Institute (AAFLI) research confirmed the salary of \$7.69 to \$12.82 and up to \$38 per month with 14 to 16 working hours per day; and as reported by Huffington Post with a

pay range of \$68 compared to mainland China at \$280 per month (BBC News, 2013, May 10; Paul & Mukherjee, 2016).

Fire disasters and death within the booming apparel industry in Bangladesh have been persistent for over a decade in the effort of keeping cost down to ensure profitability of the apparel industries; there have been multiple cases of safety compromise within the factories contributing to multiple catastrophes (Mahmud, 2014; Manik, & Yardley, 2012, December 17; Sattar, 2012; The Economist, 2013, October 26). The death of over 300 workers and 2,500 injuries within 22 apparel factories in Bangladesh from fires since 1990 has been linked to the turning of blind eye to safety regulations by authorities who have vested interest in the apparel industries (Bengali & Kader, 2015; Cline, 2013; Peiris, 2005). Similarly, the catastrophes continued to happen in 2000 with 22 workers' death linked to fire in January; 7 deaths in a stampede in May following a false fire alarm; 48 deaths and 150 injuries after workers were trapped in burning factory in November (Manik & Yardley, 2013, April 24; Watkins & Ahmed, 2013; Peiris, 2005).

Shibpur fire incident that started at 7 PM on November 20, 2000 contributed to the death of 48 workers and left 150 injured because they were trapped in a building where the only fire exit was locked (Dharmasena, 2000). The fire was pinpointed to have started on the third floor and as panic-stricken apparel workers in all floors scrambled to use the single staircase that was locked; workers burnt alive, others electrocuted, suffocated, and others trampled in their struggle to escape (BBC News, 2006, February 25; Dharmasena, 2000; Skeers, 2006). Similarly, **Godnail apparel factory** located in Narayanganj district had fire that caused 25 deaths in January 7, 2005; the workers were burnt to death while others sustained injuries (Rahman, 2005). There were 250 workers on duty at Godnail factory at the time of the fire incident; the fire was linked to the electric short circuit that occurred around 9 PM (Dharmasena, 2000; Rahman, 2005).

Spectrum Sweater and Knitting Industries factory located in Palashbari Bangladesh was contracted to make clothes for companies that included Carrefour and Zara among others collapsed killing 73 and injured 100 injuries on April 11, 2005 (Montero, 2005; Mustafa, 2013). The Spectrum building collapse occurred during the night shift with over 400 workers on the premise; the collapse was linked to a boiler explosion (BBC News, 2005, April 18; Montero, 2005; Peiris, 2005). Similarity, Jamuna Spinning Mill in Gazipur fire that occurred in February 09, 2006 contributed to 6 workers deaths; the main element that contribute to the deaths was the locking of the main gates thus hindering easy escape of workers (Skeers, 2006). Similarly, **Chittagong, Bangladesh KTS Textile Mill** fire disaster on February 24, 2006 took the lives of 54 workers and injured 150; the fire was linked to the lack ample fire exits, instead there only existed 1

exit for the entire 3 floor building (BBC News, 2006, February 25; CBC News, 2010, February 26; New York Times, 2006, February 24). The fire was reported to have started at 7 PM when the boiler and electric generator exploded; the workers couldn't easily escape because the factory gates were locked by guards to prevent theft (New York Times, 2006, February 24; Reuters, 2006, February 24; Skeers, 2006). Other fires such as **Hamim Group** fire catastrophe in December 2010 contributed to 29 deaths and wiring problem in Bangladesh factory that led to death of 25 apparel workers in 2010 (BBC News, 2012, November 25; Sattar, 2012).

Garib & Garib Newaj Factory in Bangladesh. March 2010 fire set ablaze at Garib & Garib Newaj factory in Bangladesh killing 21 and injuring 50 in; the apparel workers' deaths were linked to lack of workable exit routes for workers to escape during fire incidents (Gearhart, 2015, October 06; Huffington Post, 2010, May 02; Perera, 2010). Garib & Garib factory specialized in making knitted garments for H&M, Tesco, Primark, Tesco, Spanish Zemman, and Italian Terenora; apparel workers were knitting jumpers while others filled in orders when the factory set ablaze at 9PM; the 600 apparel workers working overtime were trapped despite efforts of 11 fire engines to clear the fire (Hickman, 2010; Huffington Post, 2010, May 02; Sattar, 2012). The 2-hour raging fire at Garib & Garib fire was traced to locked exits that prevent apparel workers from escaping when the suspected electric short-circuits from poor wiring and lax safety standards; the smoke inhalation (BBC News, 2010, February 25; Furlong, 2015; Perera, 2010). Blame was directed at H&M who denied any knowledge of fault doing and noted that audits of the factory were done in October 2010 thus the fire wouldn't have been caused by safety measures and poor working conditions that included emergency exits, fire alarms, and fire extinguishers (Furlong, 2015; Hickman, 2010; Huffington Post, 2010, May 02). Sustainable brands.com reported that 61% of H&M supplier factories didn't have fire doors installed risking 79,000 apparel workers lives; H&M shared the delay of sprinklers and fire doors is linked to unavailability of the items in Bangladesh thus must be imported (Furlong, 2015; Han, 2015).

Tazreen Fashions in Bangladesh. Tazreen Fashions fire that occurred in Bangladesh in November 4, 2012 (five months before Rana Plaza collapse in April 2013) killed 112 workers and the Guardian reported 123 deaths and 150 injuries; the factory was making apparel for Western retailers that included Tesco; J.C. Penny; Khol's; Mark & Spencer; H&M; Carrefour; Wal-Mart and Sears among others with safety hazards shown in Appendix G (BBC News, 2013, December 13; Burke & Hammadi, 2012; DePillis, 2015; Greenhouse & Harris, 2014). The fire at the Tazreen factory occurred at night shift where 1,150 apparel workers were filling orders for their contracted global retailers; the fire was linked to the illegally stored flammable yarn and fabric on the open-air ground

floor instead of storage in fireproof walls as required by the Bangladesh law (Ahmed, 2012; Gopinath & Choudhury, 2015; Manik & Yardley, 2012, December 17).

In Tazreen, the filtering of toxic smoke and fire that spread through the staircases; non-working fire escape; lack of working sprinkler systems; and management telling apparel workers to ignore fire alarms and continue working were part of what contributed to workers' deaths (Burke & Hammadi, 2012; Manik & Yardley, 2012, December 17; Smith, 2014). Unpardonable negligence was placed on the Tazreen apparel building for the workers that died; the Tazreen factory apparel workers had difficulty escaping because the fire and smoke that spread rapidly through the staircases; the iron grilles on windows; management blocking exit down the staircase by closing of collapsible gates; lack of closed-circuit television monitoring system; illegal ground floor warehouse with improper fire escape plan; and lack of annual fire safety certificate (Ross & Mosk, 2012; Manik & Yardley, 2012, December 17; Preuss, 2015). Tazreen fire disaster was charged to 13 people that included managers and security guards and 2 owners; the accusations were for negligence and could have been avoided as the apparel workers didn't have access to flee due to blocked exits and being ordered to remain at their work stations despite ringing fire alarms and rising smoke via the internal staircases (BBC News, 2013, December 22; Harris, 2013; Preuss, 2015; Power & Devnath, 2012).

Rana Plaza. The signs of cracks in the Rana Plaza building were ignored by the management team who required apparel workers to resume work the following day where the building collapsed in the morning hours contributing to the deadliest tragedy in the history of apparel industry (Ahmed & Botelho, 2015; ABC News, 2016, April 24; Badal, 2014). Apparel industry catastrophe struck again in April 24, 2013 in Dhaka Bangladesh where the 8 floor Rana Plaza building collapsed killing 1,134 workers and injuring 2,500; the collapse was linked to lack of building codes and use of substandard material with blame was directed to the mayor for the issuance of construction approvals (Allchin & Kazmin, 2013; BBC News. (2015, June 1; McClelland, 2017; Yardley, 2013). CBS News reported that Western companies such as Wal-Mart and Gap were to be held accountable for the Rana Plaza building collapse for the lax safety standards as their products were made in the factory (ABC News, 2016, April 24; Badal, 2014; Montopoli, 2013). Bangladesh Center for Worker Solidarity and International Labor Rights Forum research on 70 interviews reported on women apparel workers being sexually harassed and intimidated as they attempted to organize and petition for better working conditions; management threatened to hire thugs to beat workers and their families who become involved in unionization (Burke, 2013; Gearhart, 2016, April 27; Khan & Rodrigues, 2015).

The Bangladesh police filed murder charges against 41 people that included dozen government officials, several factory owners within the Rana Plaza building, and the sole owner of the building and his parents for the 2013 Rana Plaza building collapse (CBC News. (2015, June 01; The Guardian, 2016, July 18; Manik & Najjar, 2015). The charges were linked to management ignoring warnings and allowing worker to resume work; violation of building codes and substandard materials with main finger pointed at the powerful business man Mr. Sohel Rana who was in hiding during the Rana Plaza catastrophe (BBC News, 2015, June 1; The Guardian, 2016, July 18; Manik & Najjar, 2015). The Bangladesh government set up new procedures and regulations to ensure that Tazreen and Rana Plaza catastrophes aren't overlooked; the regulations included integrating upgrades to the apparel industry; raising of minimum wages; increase of factory inspectors; requirement for health care centers; and setting up mandatory safety committees (BBC News, 2015, June 1; DePillis, 2015; Bengali & Kader, 2015).

3. Method

3.1 Purpose Procedure

The millennials population in the U.S. amounts to 80 million with 77% millennials who are loyal to apparel brands as reported by Yahoo Business (Mcpherson, 2017); and 54% millennials taking part in online purchases as Reported by USA Today, an increase from 51% in 2015 as confirmed by 5, 330 Millennial responded in a poll conducted on January 30 to February 9 2016 (Blumenthal, 2016). Can apparel suppliers and retailers tackle the unethical practices that are impacting humanity and integrate practices that would ensure social sustainability? The focus of this research was for an opportunity to acquire and understand the millennials (age range of 18 – 34) perspectives of the unethical conduct and fashion industry in relation to apparel sourcing, manufacturing, and industry sustainability. The millennials were important to understand in ethics and apparel industry because millennials are projected by Fortune to dominate the workforce by 2020 (Hyder, 2016) and as confirmed by Accenture, 80 million millennials in U.S. spend \$600 billion yearly and are projected to spend up to \$1.4 trillion by 2020 with 30% in retail sales (Accenture, 2017; Schawbel, 2015).

The use of quantitative and qualitative methods was considered for this research that had a focus on eliciting opinions and thoughts from millennials on existing ethical problems within the fashion industry. The use of quantitative method with a focus on statistical, numerical or mathematical analysis of data wasn't in alignment with the researchers' objective to generate some in-depth perspectives of ethics in the fashion industries among the millennial generation (Alexander Di Pofi, 2002; Kaplan, 2004;

Miles, & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990). The selection of qualitative instead of quantitative method for this case study was to allow studying in real world setting and eliciting of millennial perspectives with the use of in-depth interviews and written documents in the completion of the interview surveys (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2015; Patton, 2005). Research findings were made possible by the use of qualitative case study and use of interview questions and survey questions with millennials on their available time. The sample population that consented to be part of the research consisted of 314 millennials from Northeast New Jersey, Midtown New York, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; 112 participants agreed to face-to-face interview and 202 completed the survey questions using interview questions in Appendix H. The collected raw data was coded as Apparel Ethics Question (AEQ) 1; AEQ 2 to AEQ 314, cleaned, uploaded, and analyzed using NVivo 11 qualitative software.

4. Research Findings

Interview question 1: H&M, Zara, Forever 21, Urban Outfitters, Old Navy, Victoria Secret, Wal-Mart, among others demand long hours and low wages from their overseas employees; workers are visibly sick and exhausted from grueling and excessive hours; and others use child laborer's (a) Are the actions ethical? (b) What are your views on the companies involved in the exploitive labor? The millennial participants were all in agreement that any form of worker mistreatment, use of child labor, and unfair wages were unethical practices and that all workers should be subject to livable wages for work performed and that they would boycott companies that mistreat workers and use child labor in any part of their sourcing, manufacturing, and supply chains. AEQ03 shared that *"no the actions are not ethical because they do not care about how their workers feel about their jobs; I really think that they are a bad company, I feel disgusted that they don't care about their employees."* AEQ19 shared *"child labor and worker mistreatment is extremely unethical, although it significantly reduces production costs for clothes it is wrong to mistreat factory workers, they are as human as consumers buying the products and deserve to be treated like them."* AEQ54 shared *"their actions are not ethical and should be punished, I would boycott their goods until workers receive humane conditions; I think their CEO only cares about sales and not about people, cold and soulless."* AEQ82 shared *"these actions are unethical; these companies should be taxed with extreme fines so either companies are good to their overseas workers or move to more regulated areas."*

Additionally, AEQ101 shared *"no, these actions are completely unethical; companies should treat employees with respectful conditions and equal pay and work."* AEQ193 shared *"I believe that outsourcing is important to people in developing countries, but when they are using*

child labor for work is terrible, companies cannot treat low wage workers with disrespect, they should be treated as if they were American workers.” AEQ206 shared “it is not social and the conduct is unethical, they shouldn’t use exploitive labor, one day their branding is going to be impacted.” AEQ300 shared “the actions are unethical because making people work too much making them sick to have your work done is simply horrible, it is exploitation, furthermore children shouldn’t be employed in such bad conditions, it is clearly unethical; my views on these companies are negative and I wouldn’t want to buy from them anymore.” AEQ328 shared “yes the actions are unethical, the company should think about all employees and rethink about the work of employees.”

Interview question 2: What motivates fashion industries and respective suppliers to use cheap and exploitive sweatshop labor practices that support inhumane working conditions in their sourcing and production? Millennial participants were in agreement that maximization of profits is core to companies sourcing cheaply; the research results were in alignment that the competitive fashion market is a contributor of companies continuously seeking avenues to maximizing profits while keeping all other costs low. AEQ01 shared *“reducing manufacturing costs and larger profit margin is what motivates fashion companies to use cheap labor, by using cheap, inhumane labor companies can easily maximize profit while keeping production costs relatively low.”* AEQ22 shared *“the motivation is money and if they make workers receive less, they will get an overall higher profit margin and more money equals more happiness.”* AEQ42 shared *“they are motivated by lowering their sales in order to have higher net sales, they do not care about being kind,”* and AEQ61 shared *“these companies get their motivation from money.”* AEQ88 shared *“the cheaper the industry the easier it is for the company and the less money they have to lose,”* and AEQ96 shared *“companies want to price their products as cheap as possible so that they can get more sales but still make a lot of profit.”* AEQ138 shared *“to make more money and to have cheaper prices so they have more clients,”* AEQ307 shared *“what motivates these companies is making the biggest profits as possible,”* and AEQ314 shared *“because the company have to make money and have to protect their own company.”*

Interview question 3: Suppliers such as Bangladesh factories collapsed killing over 1100 people; as a manager if instructed by your CEO to continue using outsourcing suppliers that are involved in any unethical conduct; what would you do? Eighty percent of the sample participants shared that they would reiterate to the CEO using available statistics and real time information about the unethical conduct and how continuance of production would impact the company profits and if no change occurred the situation would be reported to government bodies and to the public. Ten percent of sample participant shared that they will attempt to discuss the unethical working conditions and if the CEO is persistent, they will continue working as

instructed by the CEO to keep their job, and 10% shared that they would do as instructed by the CEO and report the incident to media.

The participant resulted included AEQ05 sharing that *"if CEO told me to continue using a supplier that was unethical I would reiterate to the CEO the situation and explain what is being done wrong and if there is no change then I will leave and expose the company."* AEQ17 shared *"if my CEO told me to continue operations in bad situations I would refuse, it is unethical and companies treat foreign laborers like slaves."* AEQ23 shared *"it's above my pay grade, I would try to convenience my CEO but if they are in full support of it, I would just do it because I need a job."* AEQ50 shared *"I would report these unethical outsourcing plants to my government and their home governments,"* and AEQ78 shared *"I would give to him the statistics and information to prove my point as to why this is unethical; if I was still ignored my next step would be to strike and open the situation to the public."* AEQ94 shared *"I would implore the CEO to find a better supplier or make conditions safe for workers before using the factory,"* and AEQ210 shared *"I wouldn't listen to the CEO, rules are rules and it isn't bad for the company, it is his problem."* AEQ304 shared *"I would quit this job after having made my point to the CEO that his actions are inadmissible,"* and AEQ311 shared *"I would do what the CEO told me, but I will report to media about the problem with the suppliers."*

Interview question 4 Anti-sweatshop movements have helped minimize use of child labor, minimization of the use of harsh chemicals, cut back on long hours; what else should such movements do to ensure that fashion industries are adhering to basic guidelines that care about human treatment? Seventy five percent of the participants shared that the anti-sweatshop movements should join forces with leading industry leaders in ethical conduct audit and oversee the factories to ensure worker safety and respect, receive fair treatment, given access to safe environments to work in, paid fair wages that adhere to social responsibility. Additionally, 15% participants shared there should be petitions for the companies to allocate funds to address unethical conduct and boycott the brands that are involved in the conduct; and 10% shared that government fines should be enacted to force the companies to change their ways in being dismissive to unethical conduct in their global sourcing and production.

The research findings included AEQ09 shared *"fine the companies therefore they will be forced to change,"* and AEQ24 shared *"anti-sweatshop movements should try to get higher wages for laborers in foreign countries."* AEQ36 shared *"make sure workers treated fairly, given access to basic needs to survive, and higher wagers for workers."* AEQ47 shared *"once the fashion companies do something illegal they should force the government to fine those countries."* AEQ61 shared *"there should be movements for equal pay and equal respect throughout the company."* AEQ133 shared *"I would suggest that the movement make a petition to force companies that use sweatshops to allocate money to the betterment of the*

workers or they will boycott in protest.” AEQ279 shared “government should send people to check the employees’ conditions and give huge fines to these companies.” AEQ292 shared “to make sure that these guidelines are respected, they should visit industries and make sure that if some of the guidelines aren’t respected that the CEO and superiors are being punished and paying of fines.” AEQ313 shared “signing and enacting new rules of examining the factories to ensure that they meet safety standards and employees are paid fair wages.”

Interview question 5: Take into consideration your own individual moral values; as the CEO of a fashion industries; what strategies would you introduce to minimize unethical conduct in the sourcing and production within the fashion industries? The sample participants were all in agreement of several policies that should be integrated and should include regular audits to ensure safe working environments, fair compensation for work done with banning of child labor, and being socially responsible for the employees and addressing needs such as healthcare and education among others. AEQ17 shared *“I would regularly check my factories to see how well my workers are doing so that they are happy and once I build up my companies I will raise the pay.”* AEQ30 shared *“I would make sure my employees have fair wages, working hours, working conditions as the CEO of a fashion company.”* AEQ57 shared *“I would put my companies manufacturing in the United States, I would give livable wages and hours with no child laborers.”* AEQ73 shared *“I would use reliable outsourcing companies,”* and AEQ85 shared *“I would use surveys to make sure everyone agreed on our conduct, I would also hold meetings to give our rules on expected conduct, if there was to be a problem, I would make workers sign contracts to ensure ethical conduct.”* AEQ158 shared *“I would hire securities to check in on the buildings to make sure everyone is happy, safe, and healthy.”* AEQ196 shared *“I would put more money in the production centers so that the employees have normal conditions and send some teams to those places so I make sure the humane conditions are respected.”* AEQ263 shared *“as CEO, I would improve the working places and conditions of employees, I would make sure that they have enough holidays, I would introduce regular health check-ups to make sure that they are in good health conditions to work if this is not put in place by superiors I would make sure to warn them and if it continues I would fire them.”* AEQ304 shared *“I would make new rules to examine the factories and enforce management to follow the set policies to ensure safety is at heart of the business.”*

5. Research Limitations

The qualitative research to acquire and understand millennials in relevance to ethics and apparel industry was limited to millennials ages 18-34; the limitation to millennials was to elicit their perspectives of the unethical conduct and fashion industry

in relation to apparel sourcing, manufacturing, and industry sustainability. The participant sample population was limited to 314 millennials out of 80 million millennials in the United States (Accenture, 2017; Schawbel, 2015) who consented to the research from the three locations that included, Northeast New Jersey, Midtown New York, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Other limitations included the time consented to the face-to-face interviews by the 112 participants and 202 declining the interviews and opting to complete the survey. The time limitation and availability of the sample size could inhibit the ability for research findings generalization to larger population. Future researchers are urged to utilize the same research questions on larger millennial population that could include millennials from other localities, researchers could target different age groups, and researchers could use quantifiable methods to test hypothesis in effort of improving credibility in understanding millennials perspectives on ethics and apparel industry.

6. Conclusion / Discussion

The problems identified in an audit of the Bangladesh apparel factories included 90% locked gates; overloaded buildings with cracks on columns; fire stairways that don't lead outside the building but directly to factory floor; flammable fabric storage areas alongside working locations (Badal, 2014; Harris, 2013; Greenhouse & Harris, 2014; Mustafa, 2013). Specifically, Bangladesh factory owners lock exit doors and employees are subject to hostility when attempting to unionize and aren't receiving government support in addressing safety are turning to companies that source apparel production to Bangladesh to take measures ensuring worker safety (Montopoli, 2013). Can apparel suppliers and retailers tackle the unethical practices that are impacting humanity and integrate practices that would ensure social sustainability? The focus of this research was for an opportunity to acquire and understand millennials (age range 18 – 34) perspectives on the unethical conduct and fashion industry with relevance to apparel sourcing, manufacturing, industry sustainability.

Fashion retailers on an average can have over 200 suppliers thus to combat the safety; environmental; labor standards; forced labor; and child labor issues among others within the supply chains can be complex; improvement of safety measures is also essential to ensure that workers are treated with moral attributes and that ethics is part of the company motto (Cross, 2017). Ethical production of apparel is essential for Britain's 23.1 million consumers as confirmed by TNS World Panel Fashion research conducted in 2007; results of the research confirmed that 76% of people agreed that sweatshops and child labor were most important element, 60% consumers agreed on

fair price, and 50% on addressing environmental damage (Hamnett, 2008). In Britain, the creation of the Ethical Fashion Forum in 2005 was the initiator of a network called "SOURCE" which is a sustainable sourcing directory for suppliers and manufacturers; Fashioningchange.com that produces ethically sourced clothing (Holland, 2013). In the U. S., polls by IPSOS confirmed that 40% were indifferent on where and how their apparels were manufactured and 70% shared that they would pay extra money to purchase apparels that were sourced ethically (Holland, 2013).

The plague of unethical conduct in the apparel industry is difficult to manage and industries have no control as they lack visibility of what the suppliers are involved in on the day-to-day operations thus have to rely on trust (McClelland, 2017). Take the critical aspect of addressing modern slavery in the apparel industry that has taken heart to companies and governments; for example, United Kingdom set legislations under the Modern Slavery Act 2015 imposing reporting requirements on companies that have a turnover of the £36-million (McClelland, 2017). Tackling the unethical conduct in the apparel industry can become complex as there lacks transparency in the supply chain; in the sourcing of raw materials such as cotton some sections use child labor to pick cotton, ginning, and spinning of yarn (McClelland, 2017). To address the unethical conduct; the setup of supplier code of conduct is essential among companies but doesn't address the core of ethics within the apparel industry; collaboration among companies, NGO, and trade unions would work best to address the labor exploitation to improve social sustainability (McClelland, 2017).

The challenge is the costs to bring the factories up-to-date; the expenses for factories to update the buildings are costly with \$250, 000 for sprinkler systems; such expenses deter companies from upgrading their buildings (Greenhouse & Harris, 2014). Companies that have moved their production globally are taking precaution to address challenges that occur and avoid problems from escalating to avoid embarrassing problems (Greenhouse, 2000). The enthusiasm to address challenges in global platforms comes after the highly vocal anti-sweatshop movement in the 2000 and the pressure from college students contributed to industry giants like Gap to integrate strategies that address working conditions for workers (Greenhouse, 2000; Greenhouse & Harris, 2014). To ensure rigorous and legally binding independent inspections proposals such as the Bangladesh Fire and Building Safety Agreement were initiated; the proposal would receive funding of \$500, 000 per year if Western companies agreed to sign; many companies that included Abercrombie; J. C. Penny; Khol's; Wal-Mart; Gap; Ralph Lauren and H&M among others at that time had declined to sign the contract (Bhasin, 2013, August 08; Montopoli, 2013). H&M had reported that they were not involved in factory ownership but acknowledged subcontracting work to 785 suppliers that work

with 785 suppliers; H&M later shared their persistence on improving standards by continuous monitoring of factories and commitment to pay livable wages (Siegle, 2013). Companies that outsource to global countries evade paying livable wages to the workers; to tackle the cheap labor concerns, the Labor Association along with companies like Nike; Reebok; L.L. Bean; and Liz Claiborne among others got involved in the initiation of fair labor practices and continuously bring awareness to consumers that foreign labor force are compensated fairly for work performed (Cross, 2017; Greenhouse, 2000). These industry leaders have taken measures of inspecting global platform factories to ensure that minimum labor standards are met and limiting the 60-hour work weeks; hazardous chemicals; reduction of 80-hour work weeks; and limiting child labor; which has improved from 30% in the year range of 2000 to 2012 to 11% in 2017 (Cross, 2017; Greenhouse, 2000; Moulds, 2017). The anti-sweatshop movement putting pressure on companies and contractors contributed to improved factory conditions with reported improvement in less use of prison labor and child labor (Greenhouse, 2000). Additionally, report by The Guardian conformed H&M efforts to ensure fire and building safety with production of training videos that increase awareness with 570, 821 workers trained on worker rights since 2008 (Siegle, 2013). Similarly, Gap announced their commitment of \$22 million for the improvement of Bangladesh factories with Wal-Mart vowing to spend \$1.8 million on education factory managers on fire safety (Montopoli, 2013).

The collaboration among apparel companies is essential to combat unethical conduct in the apparel industries; instead some western brands have taken two different sides; Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety is the collaborative effort of the 26 companies making clothes for Canada and American companies that include Kohl's; Target; Gap; and Walmart (Gearhart, 2015, October 06; Greenhouse & Harris, 2014). The second group Bangladesh Accord for Fire and Building Safety with 150 members and 14 American companies that include Mango, Carrefour, and H&M; May 2013 H&M signed the Accord with vowing to ensure fire and building safety concerns are addressed to ensure employee sustainably (Gearhart, 2015, October 06, 2015; Greenhouse & Harris, 2014; Siegle, 2013). Positive efforts by apparel industry have included fair labor practices such as paying comparable wages, termination of trade relations that violate ethics, and abiding by no exploitation regulation on illegal immigrants and child labor are essential to ensure social sustainability among apparel industry workers; the International Labour Organization that is correlated to the European clothing manufacturers ensures that the integration of proper labor practices occur (Cross, 2017). Thailand, Pakistan, Malaysia and India experiencing increase of 15% or more in wages monthly (see Appendix I) with a labor wage growth rate

comparison between 2015 and 2016 (see Appendix J) and some regions increasing the minimum wage based on labor unions like Cambodia and the use of government forces in Indonesia to shorten the gap involved in the minimum and living wages; India adjusting the labor rate based on economic factors such as consumer price index, GDP, and inflation rate (Lu, 2016)

The inspection of apparel industry is essential to help in the commitment of addressing safety problems and preventing catastrophes from occurring; Human Rights Watch confirmed that there existed 18 inspectors within Shaka district in Bangladesh; a number that wasn't enough to inspect over 5000 factories that work under pressure and dismiss safety concerns to meet Western retailers' inventory demands (Montopoli, 2013). The complexity of addressing the unethical practices in apparel industry is evident in the study conducted by the New York University Stern School of Business; factories in Bangladesh have terrible working conditions and the middlemen play a role of secrecy in sending orders from western companies (Greenhouse & Harris, 2014). BBC reported that 40% of Bangladesh factories catastrophes are linked to safety concerns (BBC News, 2016, September 10); Bangladesh factories don't meet fire department clearance thus continue to work illegally without a license; the integration of safe electrical boxes, sprinkler systems that are structurally sound, and meeting building code agreement of 75 feet or taller buildings would help ensure safety in apparel factories (Montopoli, 2013; Greenhouse & Harris, 2014).

To address the unethical practices in Bangladesh and other factories' around the world; retailers could take measures such as registering in the supply registry; taking time to know and visiting their selected suppliers; and monitoring for signs to identify if the factories are subcontracting (Moulds, 2017). The subcontracting occurs as the factories are pressured to meet set deadlines or fulfill unanticipated orders by the buying companies; the adjustment of purchasing practices by buyers could ease the pressure to subcontract work that can impact safety (Moulds, 2017). The integration of measures such as the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) would be essential in addresses guidelines related to cotton dust and dye safety; machine operation; heat stress; hazardous substances; ergonomics (Cross, 2017). Bangladesh's vision to gain \$50 billion in readymade garment exports by the year 2021 has contributed to BGMEA and BKMEA integrating safety measures for healthy business environment; working on improving exports and imports; improving social sustainability status; training workers to be skilled; and working on improving coordination with outside manufactures; all these efforts are being set in motion to attract more business and increase Bangladesh foreign exchange (Nick, 2017).

Going green is also essential in today's environment and companies are taking initiative in addressing pollution by taking the route of using environmentally friendly materials that are eco-friendly; materials that include soy and hemp for fabric weaves; use of organic cotton; bamboo; recycled synthetic fibers such as plastic bags and polyester in materials to minimize biodegradables out of landfills and use of plant based dyes to give fabrics color (Cross, 2017). To address the textile waste in developing nations; United Nations exports used clothing to donating to developing nations that include Pakistan, Russia, and India; yet there is threat of lack of demand for used clothes with the surplus of cheap clothing from Asia thus forcing developed nations to address the textile waste of 12.8 million tons of the 15.1 million of textile produced in 2013 as reported by Environmental Protection Agency (Tan, 2016). Companies like H&M and Patagonia have integrated take-back programs with an objective to "zero garments ending up in landfills;" the used clothes are collected and the recycled materials are used for new apparels (Tan, 2016). Specifically, H&M reported their dedication to social and environmental sustainability activities to include publishing of their selected suppliers; banning of sandblasting in 2010; reusing and recycling clothing with innovative fabric such as recycled wool, polyester, and organic hemp; second biggest buyer of organic cotton 2012; water stewardship; reduction in chemical and water usage to ensure social sustainability of farmers (Siegle, 2013). Other avenues of addressing waste include swapping clothes with other people and the experimentation of ideas that include "Rent the Runway" with access to rent monthly by paying monthly fee (Tan, 2016).

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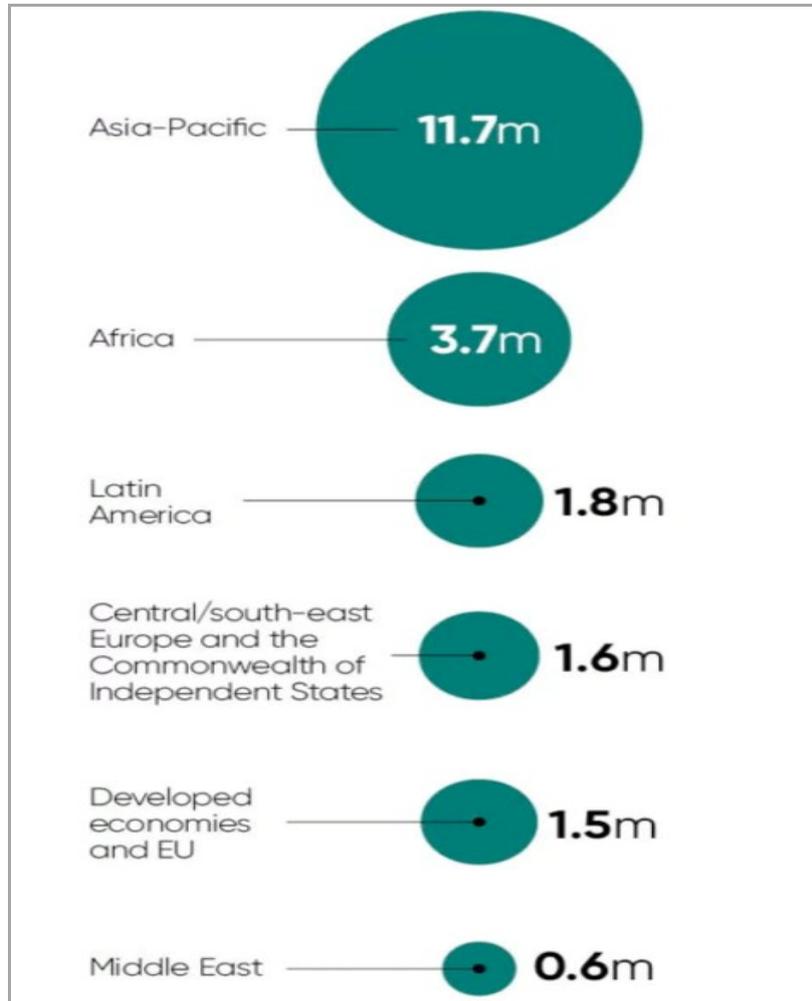
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Appendix A: Forced Labour: A Global Issue



Source: Raconteur (McClelland, 2017).

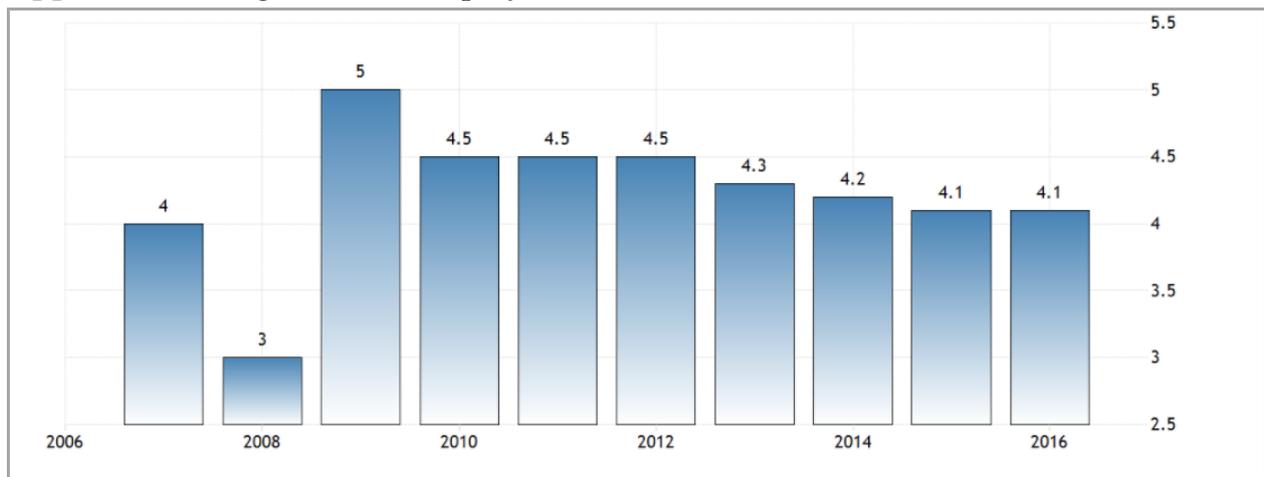
Appendix B: Bangladesh Population

Jet Mboga
ELICITING MILLENNIAL PERSPECTIVES ON ETHICAL PRACTICES AND
MORAL CONDUCT WITHIN THE APPAREL INDUSTRY



Source: Trading Economics.com; Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2017).

Appendix C: Bangladesh Unemployment Rate



Source: Trading Economics.com; Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

Appendix D: Bangladesh Unemployment Rate Specifics

Jet Mboga
ELICITING MILLENNIAL PERSPECTIVES ON ETHICAL PRACTICES AND
MORAL CONDUCT WITHIN THE APPAREL INDUSTRY

Bangladesh Labour	Last	Previous	Highest	Lowest	Unit
Unemployment Rate	4.10	4.10	5.10	2.20	percent
Employed Persons	54.10	56.00	56.00	35.90	Million
Wages	7388.40	6469.20	7388.40	1900.00	BDT/Month
Wages in Manufacturing	243.00	206.00	243.00	113.00	Index Points
Population	159.90	157.90	159.90	50.10	Million
Retirement Age Men	59.00	59.00	59.00	57.00	
Retirement Age Women	59.00	59.00	59.00	57.00	
Living Wage Family	16128.70	16113.80	16128.70	15080.40	BDT/Month
Living Wage Individual	8927.30	8933.00	9230.50	8605.50	BDT/Month

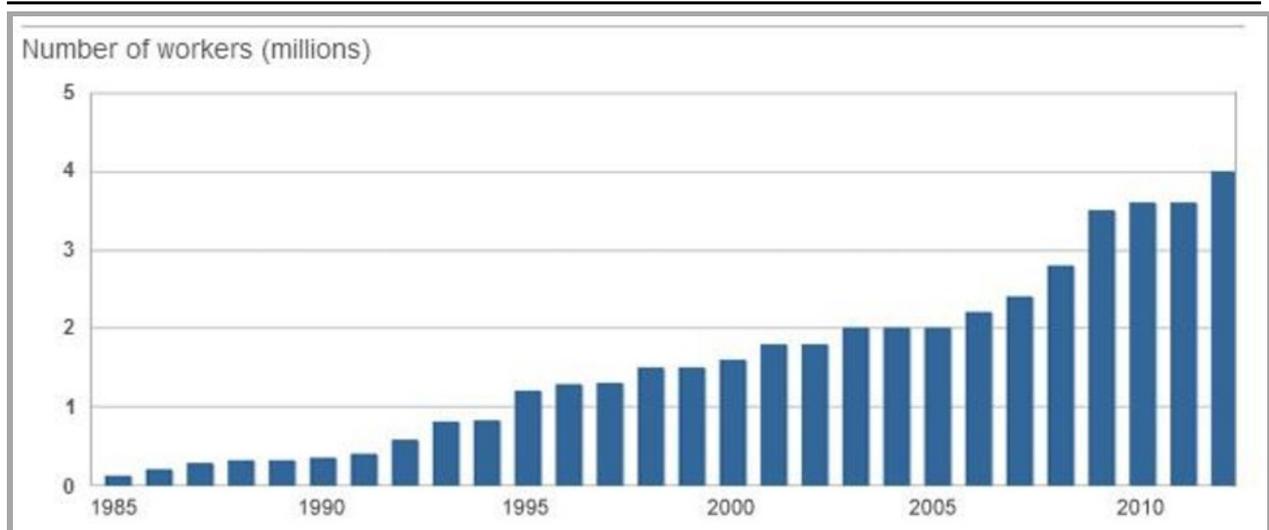
Source: Trading Economics.com; Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

Appendix E: Bangladesh's Top Exports

Product Group	2016 Value in US Dollars	Percentage: Total Exports
Knit or crochet clothing, accessories	\$16.8 billion	43.40%
Clothing, accessories (not knit or crochet)	\$16.7 billion	43.20%
Miscellaneous textiles, worn clothing	\$977.7 million	2.50%
Footwear	\$901.4 million	2.30%
Paper yarn, woven fabric	\$660.9 million	1.70%
Fish	\$612.5 million	1.60%
Headgear	\$278.9 million	0.70%
Leather/animal gut articles	\$255.8 million	0.70%
Raw hides, skins not furskins, leather	\$208.5 million	0.50%
Vehicles	\$86.1 million	0.20%

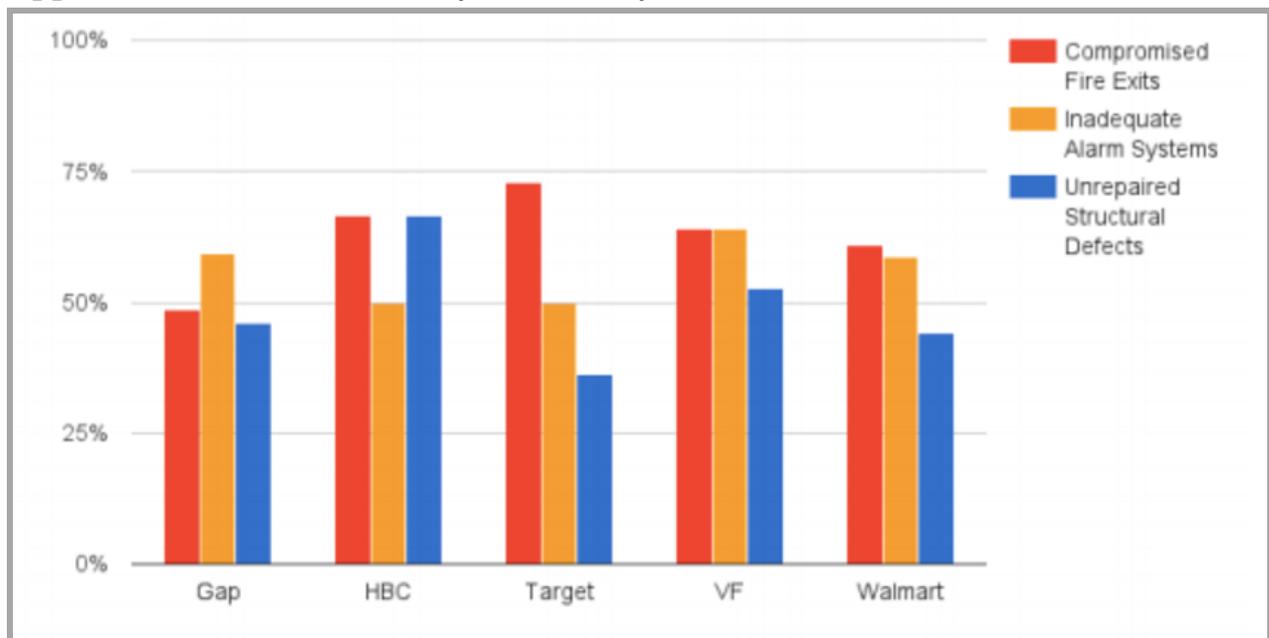
Source: Workman, 2017.

Appendix F: People Working in Garment Factories in Bangladesh



Source: BGMEA; BBC News (2013, May 10).

Appendix G: Uncorrected Safety Hazards, by Brand



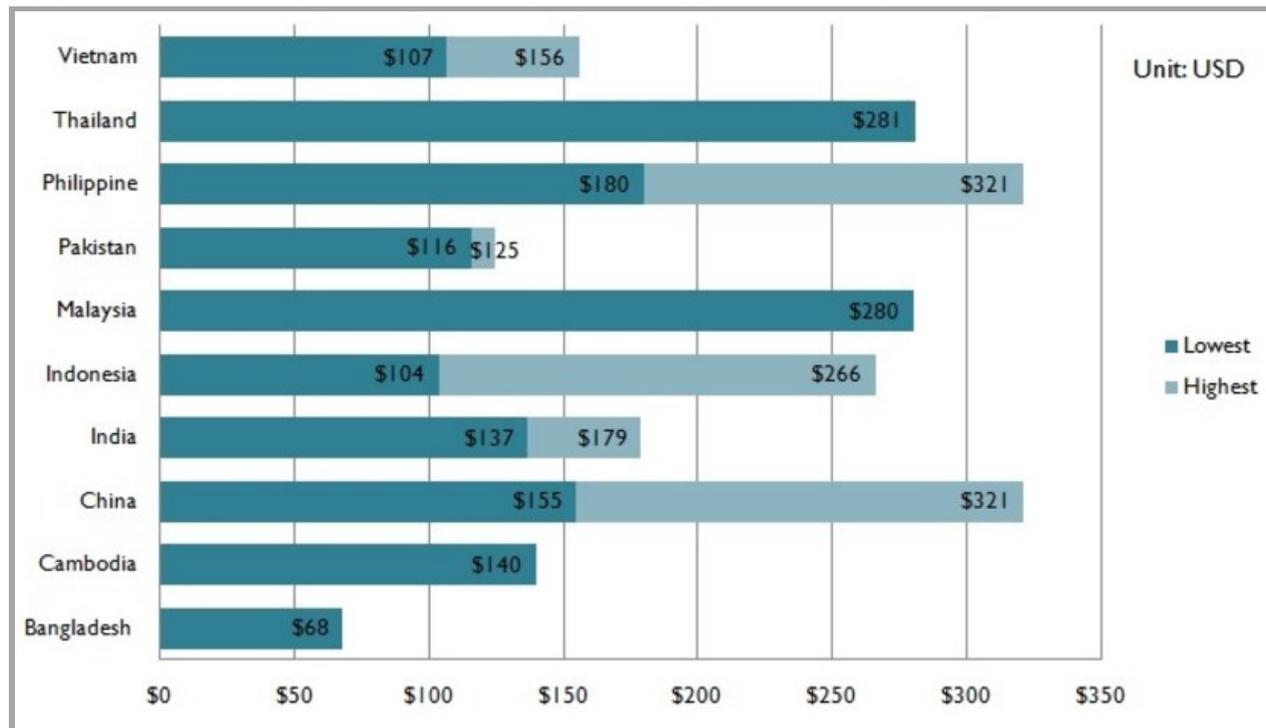
Source: Huffington Post; Somers, 2016.

Appendix H: Interview Questions: Fashion Industries

1. H&M, Zara, Forever 21, Urban Outfitters, Old Navy, Victoria Secret, Wal-Mart, among others demand long hours and low wages from their overseas employees; workers are visibly sick and exhausted from grueling and excessive hours; and others use child laborer's (a) Are the actions ethical? (b) What are your views on the companies involved in the exploitive labor?

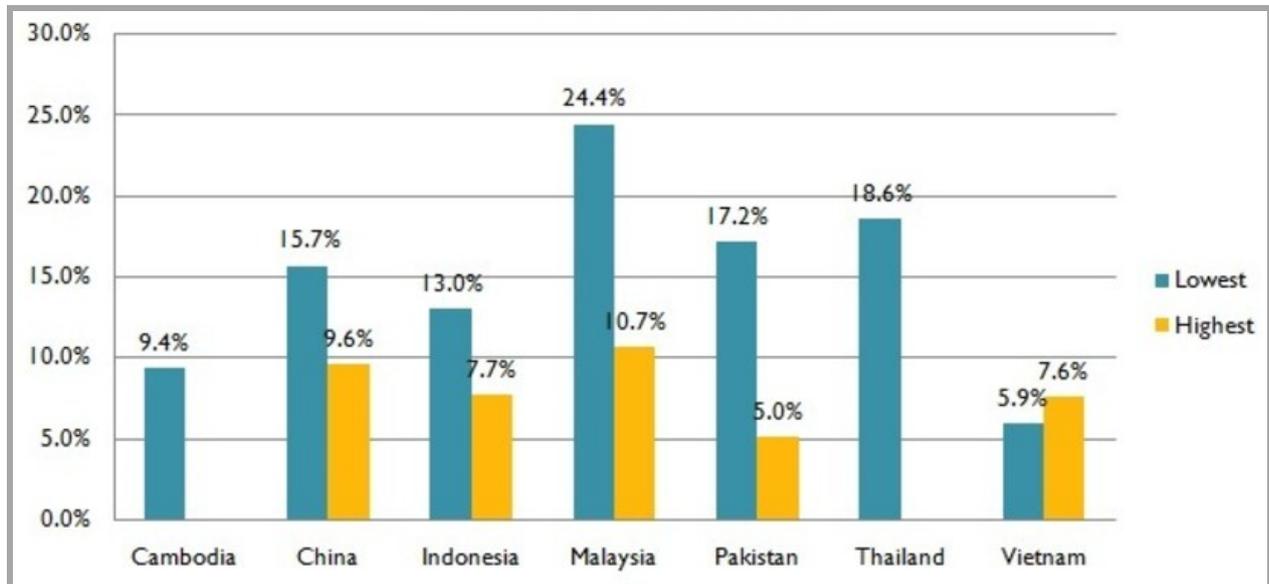
2. What motivates fashion industries and respective suppliers to use cheap and exploitive sweatshop labor practices that support inhumane working conditions in their sourcing and production?
3. Suppliers such as Bangladesh factories collapsed killing over 1100 people; as a manager if instructed by your CEO to continue using outsourcing suppliers that are involved in any unethical conduct; what would you do?
4. Anti-sweatshop movements have helped minimize use of child labor, minimization of the use of harsh chemicals, cut back on long hours; what else should such movements do to ensure that fashion industries are adhering to basic guidelines that care about human treatment?
5. Take into consideration your own individual moral values; as the CEO of a fashion industries; what strategies would you introduce to minimize unethical conduct in the sourcing and production within the fashion industries?

Appendix I: Monthly Minimum Wage in the Apparel Industry: 2016



Source: (Lu, 2016).

Appendix J: Growth Rate of Monthly Minimum Wage in the Apparel Industry: 2016 vs 2015



Source: (Lu, 2016).

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