Sweatshop Labor and Unethical Working Conditions

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Thesis Statement

Sweatshop is a modern day unethical problem in many businesses in America and underdeveloped countries where many workers have to face unreasonable working conditions which are immoral and unfair.

Introduction

A factory that violates two or more labor laws in the United States is called a sweatshop, as defined by the U.S. Department of Labor. Sweatshops have issues of poor working conditions, unreasonable hours, lower wages, child labor and a lack of benefits, etc. Many US companies will outsource their production to other countries where sweatshops are common like Bangladesh and China. About 12.3 million people each year are forced to work in dangerous sweatshop conditions; it is a morally wrong act for which business employers are responsible (Globalethicsnetwork.org, 2013).

Moral Issues With Sweatshop

Many Americans are not aware that their appetite for foreign manufactured goods gives rise to the sweatshop issue in the controversial industry. Sweatshops in the world are lucrative in developing countries because they use low-wage labor, which results in lower production costs. The labor is simply underpaid, which is the horrible face of industrialization; they also do not have any financial security. An average working person is frowned upon by the sweatshop culture, which calls for American Corporations to stop buying goods from China or Bangladesh (Globalethicsnetwork.org, 2013).

According to Kantian ethics, we can conclude that sweatshops are morally wrong. Kantian ethics is based on Deontology, which is the reasoned account of duties. Therefore, one has a moral to perform the right things and refrain from morally wrong things like sweatshops. Kant says that we should act only on that maxim that we can at the same time consistently. 85% of the sweatshop workers are young women between the ages of 15 and 25, while 98 million children laborers agriculture. Mental, physical or even sexual abuse is not taken seriously by managers in the workplace. The worst incident was reported in Bangladesh in 2012 when 200 workers were injured due to not being able to escape from the burning building. The firing of female workers is common when they get pregnant; poor working environments are responsible for many sweatshop female workers' deaths (http://visionlaunch.com/26-stunning-modern-day-sweatshops-statistics-facts/#).

We can also examine the morality of sweatshops using Utilitarianism. This ethics is based on teleology, which is the reasoned account of ends. The utilitarian approach entails an analysis of what is good on a broad scale. The Sweatshop Act becomes morally wrong because the corporations in China take unfair advantage of workers and obtain benefits at a low cost. So, by applying Utilitarianism to the morality of sweatshops, we can use the concept of the Greatest Happiness Principle, which states that the highest proportion of happiness can be obtained by the actions that are morally right. We can also think that Utilitarianism could persuade us that the corporations receiving the benefit of low costs earn more money through sweatshops, so the amount of happiness caused by increased sales may outweigh the suffering the workers go through in sweatshops.

In Bangladesh's capital, Dhaka, an eight-story complex called Rana Plaza became the death place of innocent children and families. Police caught owner Rana who was escaping to India, criminal charges of negligence and illegal construction imposed against him sparked celebrations among the families of dead victims. Rana wanted to get rich and used his political contacts to breach the law; he insisted the building was safe, but it had obvious cracks. Police also arrested the owner of Phantom Apparels Ltd, which was located on the fifth floor of Rana Plaza. Rana seems isolated from his political allies now; even the Prime Minister is keeping his distance from him now (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/apr/28/bangladesh-garment-factory-collapse-owner-held).

Looking at the modern-day conditions in China, we can see that the world's biggest companies, including Dell, Apple, Wal-Mart, and Disney, continue to burden labor with long hours and low wages. They even break the Child Labor Laws in Bangladesh, where there are harsh conditions, deaths, and the collapse of buildings all cause disreputability. Businesses should avoid actions that make the public suffer. Wall Mart has also broken the law by employing child labor for 12 years and forcing other workers to work more than 16 hours. The wage is 55 cents per hour in China is a blatant violation of the law. These workers also put their lives in danger with hazardous chemicals in the factories where the air-conditioning facilities are poor and the temperature is hot and humid. All these examples are against Utilitarianism's element of the Greatest Happiness Principle. Therefore, it is not morally right to break laws and treat workers wrongfully.

Conclusion

Sweatshops in developing countries are an immoral act that makes the lives of laborers miserable by paying them low wages and making them work for long hours. Unless fair trade policies are not implemented in China and Bangladesh, sweatshops cannot stop. The stores should sell fair trade-certified products to improve the lives of workers. Proper provision of facilities in Bangladesh factories can also reduce sweatshop. When businesses disregard moral values, they destroy ethical standards and do not maintain a positive image.

References

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