

Exploratory Study on Preventive Measures to Prevent Child Labour Exploitation in Belt and Road Countries from Perspective of Fashion Industry

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There are increasing problems of child labour in Asia, specifically in the developing countries. As such, this research work focuses on the exploitation of child labour in Bangladesh, which is not only the largest apparel supplier across the globe, but also the target of numerous reports of child labour exploitation. Many companies outsource their manufacturing to developing countries as the costs of production, labour and land are considerably lower. However, they also neglect the ethical issues in the developing countries and the social issues are downplayed for profit gains. As such, manufacturers may take advantage of the vulnerability of the developing countries by employing their children and paying insufficient wages for their hard work. Most of these children are much younger than the local stipulated legal age of employment. Hence, this research work aims to help provide realistic measures to prevent the exploitation of children and promote the overall welfare of society as well as facilitate sustainable prosperity. The objective of this study is to present a systematic analysis of the literature that documents child labour. The individual measures taken by the different stakeholders might not be adequate enough for a holistic solution to prevent and mitigate child labour. It is also important to take into consideration the viewpoint of the different companies, workers and the Bangladesh government. Therefore, the tripartite theory and Triple Bottom Line model are applied in this research work. This study discusses the issue of child labour with educators and fashion industry experts to obtain their insights and misconceptions. Moreover, the study focuses on providing different perspectives from the education and the industry sectors to better understand their views on child labour which will contribute to a comprehensive analysis of the problem and more robust findings. As

many developing countries rely on foreign direct investment (FDI) to expand their market overseas and attract new investment to further develop their economy, such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the growing opportunities may only serve to increase the likelihood of child exploitation. Therefore, companies need to understand their role in corporate social responsibility (CSR) as this involves their business reputation and meets the current demands of the community. A social dialogue among the different stakeholders in the community can be conducive and key to preventing child labour.

Key words: *Child labour; Bangladesh; The Belt and Road Initiative; Triple bottom line model; Apparel supplier*

1. Introduction

Child labour has existed throughout the century. The problem seems to be never-ending. As reported by the International Labor Organization (ILO) (2021), approximately 152 million children aged 5-17 years are working worldwide. The world has moved into a digital era of artificial intelligence, where tasks can be completed in seconds, yet still, it struggles to protect our next generation from modern-day slavery. Compared to an adult, children are far more at risk to be abused, exploited and left in dangerous conditions (Cathryne et al., 2004). Poverty plays a crucial factor that accelerates child exploitation, nevertheless, family size, geography, education, strict social and cultural norms, and global economics all play a part in it (Cathryne et al., 2004). Considering that children work to fulfil their daily necessities to survive in a competitive society, many times huge corporations take advantage of these situations to benefit their businesses (Chabrak, 2015). A large number of fashion retailers have been frequently held responsible for searching for cheap labour around the world. Multinational apparel brands have continuously outsourced their manufacturing activities to the developing countries, as a result, to seek cheap labour and production cost (Islam and Stringer, 2020).

With growing globalisation, the fashion industry disseminates its production, manufacturing and operation globally. According to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 2019, Bangladesh was ranked second for exporting ready-made garments, after China, where \$30 billion worth of garments were produced by 4.5 million workers (WTO, 2019). As claimed by the president of the Garment Manufacturers and Export Association of Bangladesh, almost 80 per cent of the Bangladesh foreign currency originated from the garment industry. The government of Bangladesh further plans to expand the industry in the next five year, as almost 50 million people depend on the garment industry for their livelihood. Apart from that, business opportunities, namely, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) project provides investors with plenty of opportunities, especially to those of garment production, which includes cheap labour cost and abundant supply of labour. Despite the favourable business opportunities, this project brings further light to the child labour issue that was long prevalent in the apparel industry,



creating an adverse effect for BRI. As a result, this raises the question of ethical sourcing in the fashion supply chain. On that account, corporate social responsibility acts as an instrument that could ultimately decrease the number of child labour, as long as it can be properly executed and controlled. As suggested by The United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2009) businesses should make an effort to study and do in-depth research on the particular country they are outsourcing their products from. By doing this, businesses can avoid contracting to suppliers that may employ child labour. Apart from this, businesses should also clearly convey their policies to their suppliers from recruiting children. Hence, taking appropriate preventive measures on this issue is crucial, to create successful business opportunities and to put an end to the suffering of our children.

There have been countless studies that focus on the subject of child labour. Many studies conducted on child labour discusses the problem on a superficial level. However, the majority of the studies fail to provide realistic solutions to help prevent the ascending problem, lacking important details to assist authorities and individuals. To fill the research gap, we address the key research questions of this study: Why is it still common for manufacturers to hire children even after knowing the consequences? Why are the measures taken to prevent child labour still fail to resolve the issue? What is the impact of child labour on the local economy? How do business opportunities, for instance, the Belt and Road Initiative can influence the issue of child labour?

The main focus area of this study is on the exploitation of children in developing Asian countries, which are part of BRI. Given that, most cheap labouring factories are located in Bangladesh, Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia and India. Therefore, the focus of the study will be in BRI's developing countries. The importance of studying this ethical issue is to provide an in-depth look at the growing number of child workers in developing nations. At the same time, providing realistic preventive measures to different stakeholders in our community to help solve the widespread issue of child exploitation.

The study has been divided into seven main sections. After the introduction in Section 1, we conduct a literature review in Section 2. It gives the readers a comprehensive overview and details on the research using scholarly articles. In Section 3, we create a conceptual framework of the research topic. The methodological part of the study, discussing the method of investigation, analysis and collection of information are presented in Section 4. The finding and discussion are provided in Sections 5 and 6, respectively. The conclusion is given in Section 7.

2. Literature Review

2.1 *Background of BRI*

BRI brings in new opportunities for countries around the world. China's "Belt and Road" initiative is a recreation of the historic "Silk Road", a route that stretched from China's provinces to Asia, through the region of Middle East and ends at Europe (Chan et al., 2018). The BRI is an aspiring project that connects China to the overseas market, by introducing an economic framework that pursues to expand development outside of China. The initiative enhances connectivity through different forms of transportation in land and sea, which opens the door to economic integration, commerce, free flow of goods and services and more (Sharma & Kundu, 2016). Several reporters have presented the BRI policy as the Chinese version of 'Marshall Plan', which was an initiative passed by America in 1984 to help Western Europe, applying the similar concept in the BRI policy, where China introduces to revitalize the global economy after the world economic crisis (UNCTAD, 2019). The BRI gives China the chance to show its economic strength by providing resources to help developing countries to build their infrastructure, correspondingly supporting the BRI plan.

The BRI encourages comprehensive development and investments for developing and undeveloped countries by removing the clothing import tariffs and creating an open market for easier international trading. Nevertheless, many people see the initiative as a foreign invasion policy to expand China's influence (Lau et al., 2017). Despite everything, the BRI strategy impacts the layout of China's apparel industry as the initiative encourages import of clothing for the developing countries, as the plan opened the market, and encourages the flow of investment and development. Along with that, China's BRI stresses high importance on environmental sustainability issues (Wang et al., 2018). As mentioned by *the 2019 Annual Conference of the Permanent China Construction Law Forum (2019)*, businesses need to strengthen its competitiveness through achieving their social obligation, which is mandated by their employers, taking into account that, performing in a socially responsible way is a fundamental requirement for companies. The government of China puts a large amount of focus on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the BRI, through the BRI Chinese firms plan to carry out CSR in developing countries by building their local economies, help increase their employment prospects, raise their domestic laws and protect their local biodiversity (Wang et al., 2018).

2.2 *Child Labour in the Fashion Industry along the BRI*

Child labour has become a key focus on an international level and has caught the attention of people worldwide. Child labour in dangerous form can be found in many developing and undeveloped countries, a result of fewer economic opportunities and widespread poverty in the nation. Child labour could be identified as the work minor part take in, that hinders their development, education and livelihood in the future. Child labour includes many underaged

children who work all day and are regularly prone to dangerous jobs. It is expected that it influences the one-sixth of children around the world. Work fields include ranches, manufacturing plants, building sites, mines and landfills. Children in dangerous working conditions represent any child that is less than the age group of 18 years, who works for 43 hours or more within the week, which may involve working in construction and excavation, operating heavy machinery, vulnerable to harmful chemicals (Bromley and Mackie, 2009; Jensen, 2014).

The employment of children is a century-old practice, almost every country in the past at some point had exploited children for their gains. Exploitation can be referred to as a way to use profitably and may take advantage of situations without concerning the moral values (Sample, 2003). As Benner and Tushman (2003) writes, the act of exploiting people is always wrong. Exploitation encourages people who are in no condition to refuse or argue with the demands of opposition. Since child labour is paid at the lowest and sometimes is not even paid, therefore being prone to economic exploitation. The word 'Child Labour' is used to imply 'working children'. There is numerous of interpretation for child labour. Considering that, child workers are found in almost every industry, this results in several denotations of child labour (Van Daalen and Mabilard, 2019). As mentioned by Stein and Davis (1940) child labour is considered when any employment hinders their physical and mental growth, while interfering with their schooling. However, interpretation of child labour in the past failed to provide any clear ideas on the age of the child working nor emphasising the importance of their working conditions. As mentioned by Aries (1962), throughout the middle ages, children as young as 6, were sent to different towns to learn skills in agriculture, textile, trade and so on, to work as trainees, indicating that they could carry out work as adults.

The fashion industry is known to be an enormous market. According to the Global Fashion Industry Statistics (GFIS), the value of the fashion industry in the market is a hefty 406 billion dollars. Around 3.5 million of the global population is associated with the business, valuing up to 3 trillion dollars and contributing up to 2 in the percentage of the global GDP. As a result, it is common to see unfaithful practices within the industry. As mentioned, the dark side of the fashion industry is often overlooked by the consumer and media, everyone focuses on the glamorous side of the industry, not realising the clothes they are wearing are possibly made by children, deprived of their education and childhood. As mentioned by the International Initiative to End Child Labour (2021), it is a day to day business in the apparel industry to exploit child labour and use forced labour for many manufacturing companies. In the era of globalisation, factories compete to offer the cheapest price, especially to fast-fashion brands. That is where child workers are commonly associated with the apparel industry. Numerous adults are treating children as cheap and disposable labour, as many are tortured with violence when the children make an error (Hartjen and Priyadarsini, 2012).

The apparel industry is known for exploiting its labour and being labour-intensive. Since the expense and obstacles for entering are low, therefore the apparel industry is usually an easy path for developing countries to begin their industrialization and develop their economy (Kian, 2009). As a consequence, child workers are deprived of their childhood and schooling. Some child workers are even treated inhumanely, such as beaten and sexually harassed at their workplace. Any jobs performed by children that affect their physical, spiritual and psychological well-being or hampers their right to receive education, is indeed found in the apparel industry, especially within the supply chain, resulting from the lack of strict policies and monitoring (Zaman et al., 2014). According to International Labor Organization (ILO) (2021), to cope with the growing demand of consumers worldwide, an estimate of 170 million child workers are working in the garment and textile industry to comply with that demand. Given that, manufacturing of garments requires low-skills and cheap labour source, which can easily be found in developing countries. As a result, it becomes cost-effective for factories to hire child workers. Nevertheless, the increase in globalisation has significantly changed the way the fashion industry runs. With the increase of conscious consumerism in the past decades has caused many fashion brands to evaluate and rethink their supply chain.

There has been substantial outsourcing of financial output from the developed countries to the developing countries due to globalization. Globalization and progression of markets have increased competition among developing countries for goods and cheap labour. BRI has accelerated cheap labor problem. This has caused children to become vulnerable to multinational corporations and private agencies (Le et al., 2019). As mentioned by ILO (2021), there is a definite connection between child workers and the lack of proper payroll for adult labour within the textile factories. They claim that as long as child labour exists, there would be an abundant source of cheap labour, once the practice of child labour fully demolishes, there would be an insufficient amount of labour. In consequence, this would enable adult labour workers to bargain for better working conditions and higher wages. This implies that the abolishment of child labour can improve the condition of adult workers and bring in more employment opportunities for them. Once the adult workers start to earn a decent salary, then their children could have an opportunity to receive education and move up the social mobility ladder.

2.3 *Preventive Measures – Child Labour*

As noted by Gough (2013), preventive measures can be defined as a way to lessen the probability of drawbacks. However, there are very few studies that investigate the effectiveness of different preventive measures. Therefore, it is crucial to pay attention to preventive ways to deal with child abuse. As claimed by Powell (2014), to look for the end of child labour, we need a system that gives them greater opportunities, rather than enforcing extreme regulatory laws that prohibit the children from selecting the best possible options. Prohibiting child labour practice all together through trade or policy sanctions can further push the children into worse scenarios. Child apparel workers are exploited in many developing countries, such as

Cambodia and Bangladesh, they are often prone to excessive working hours with extremely poor pay wage with the hazardous condition of work, despite domestic laws opposing the use of child labours. Oftentimes garment workers in developing nations lack labour rights. As a result, labour workers face violence when taking a stand (Chan et al. 2018).

Many times, the results of preventive measures are not seen instantly, making them less used in political decision-making. Many countries have a well-developed social protection plan to help prevent child labour and the employment of children, however, due to corruption, are not given much importance to (Bromley, et al., 2009). As mentioned by the OECD (2021), the most efficient way in tackling child labour is to recognise its root cause, which is lack of access to education, companies need to collaborate with established programs that influence combating the child labour issue through government schemes, various stakeholders and community initiatives.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Social Dialogue

Social dialogue can be described as a form of discussion, where multiple stakeholders from employers to employees to the government can participate to achieve common ground in terms of socio-economic challenges. As cited by the NTSD by ILO (2021), the concept of social dialogue is to help bring in stakeholders from different parts of the society to address state policies, legislations and other policymaking that can affect the stakeholders. Social dialogue is an important tool in fostering and obtaining working opportunities, comprehensive development, and social unity. This helps to make sure that there is smooth cooperation politically and economically, that further helps to alleviate social crises. Social dialogue helps to address such social and economic issues while providing a platform for people of various backgrounds to discuss and find a solution to problems. Social dialogue can strengthen policymaking, which can lead to successful execution and enhance the quality of the results (ILO, 2021). Considering that, social dialogue takes place with multiple stakeholders' opinions on social and economic issues, making the decision much better thought of, making the outcome of the policy more effective. Consequently, can be one of the instruments used to further increase the problem of child workers in society.

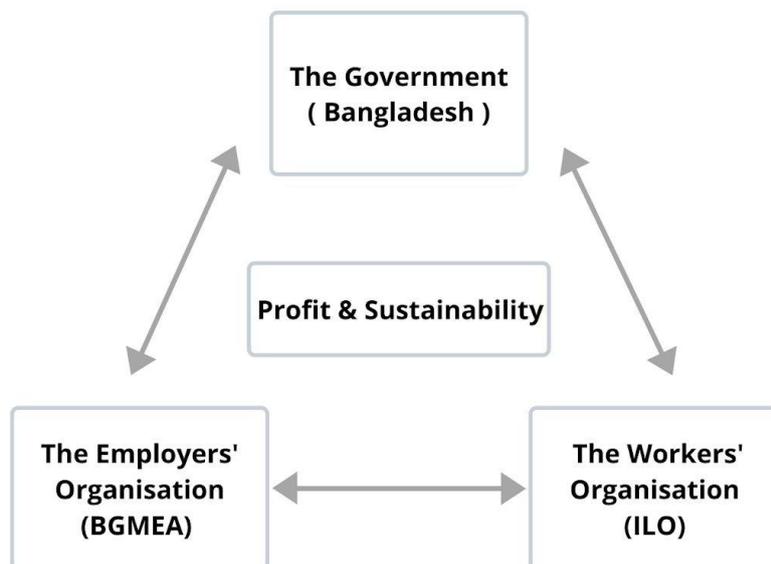
3.2 Conceptual Framework

Tripartism is a collective discussion between three parties in which the group reaches a consensus on issues. It can be characterised as cooperation between employers, employees and the government, where each party is on an equal level of decision making, where they can represent their side of arguments to pursue solutions to common problems. Triple Bottom Line (TBL) can be described as a model that helps businesses boost their performance. The model has three parts that are connected to create a sustainable business practice, it clues, "people,

planet and profit". The TBL model connects environmentally sustainable practices with an increase in productivity and resulting in overall productivity while promoting work opportunities (ILO, 2021). Due to Tripartism and TBL demonstrated shortcomings to reflect the research context, we create the combined model (i.e., Tripartite and Triple Bottom Line) in our study.

Such combined model addresses the importance of collaboration between the three stakeholders, the government of Bangladesh, the workers' organisation such as the ILO and the employers' organisation such as the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA). Figure 1 displays the combination of the Tripartite and TBL model. The communication between these three stakeholders can lead to sustainability in society, which includes the topic of child labour and the profitability of companies and their workers. Since the companies who give out contract orders to BGMEA are a profit-making organisation. Therefore, when communicating with the companies we need to make sure that their needs are also met when companies focus on sustainability issues in society and are conscious in terms of their sourcing it eventually lead to consumers to support their business, resulting in companies profit, if in case they had to pay extra to ensure that all sustainable precautions are performed.

Figure 1: Tripartite and TBL Model



Corporate transparency for CSR communication is important, being open to discuss the problems and issues refers to being transparent as a company. It is also important for companies to give information regarding their management, as not to be seen as suspicious. Sometimes being transparent can be seen as a challenge for some companies especially when the issues are regarding working conditions and child labour (Wettstein et al., 2019). The workers' organisation namely the ILO, has been instrumental in forming the base of tripartite

cooperation to eliminate child labour practices in the apparel sector of developing countries. This shows that ILO has helped to create a social dialogue in the community.

However, this is far from reality, more and more companies are found to using child labour in their supply chain to produce their products. This leads to mistrust from their consumers and the general public, severely affecting their business. Since the fashion industry is a multinational and global business, it is important to follow the concepts of CSR. Therefore, it is worth noting that the confidence of customers can only be gained by open access to information by committing to take up responsibilities for their companies' actions. In recent times, far more clothing is being made in developing countries around the globe, more than two-thirds of shipments of garments are exported to developed countries from developing economies (Chan et al. 2018). The campaign of CSR is strongly influenced by consumer awareness, for companies to take responsibility for their actions, consumers use their buying power as a political stance against companies' irresponsibility and lack of CSR in their management. This paved the way for the change in development strategies for social and environmental issues, making way for new business ideas to cope with these situations while aiming to reduce negative impacts from the fashion industry (Le et al. 2019).

The tripartite and the triple bottom line model alone could not do justice to the prevention of child labour. Considering that, the tripartite model focuses more on the process of creating a social dialogue between each stakeholder, and trying to reach consciousness among the different stakeholders involved. Whereas the triple bottom line model focuses mainly on the need to provide a sustainable business practice in the industry and is trying to promote working opportunities sustainably. Combining the two models gives a clearer picture of creating a social dialogue in the community while helping business perform better for the betterment of the community as a whole.

4. Methodology

4.1 Grounded Theory

This research will be using the grounded theory method. Grounded theory is a structural approach involving the use of developing theories by analysing the data. The basis of grounded theory research is mainly focused on qualitative research. The grounded theory provides a different perception of the research framework, which can lay the basis for a functional and conceptual grounded theory (Bryant, 2017). The grounded theory method has tremendous importance, as this theory presents concise, systematic instruction when performing qualitative research. The grounded theory approach has become a common tool for social science, as the theory helps to manage the theoretical process of the investigation. Which then ensures the data collected is justified by scientific investigation.

4.2 Data Collection

Qualitative research distinctive feature is the face-to-face way to collect information, it makes the whole process more involved. The in-depth interview helps generate a huge amount of narrative, this helps researchers to deeply understand the situation of their interviewees (Rowley, 2012). As such, an interview will be carried out which will include 10 interviewees from the fashion industry. The interview will last up to 30 minutes each, with following a semi-structured format.

The interview will include 5 interviewees from the education sector, who have a background from the fashion industry. By including interviewees from the education sector, they can give an insight into their ethical consciousness, which is important as they build future leaders that will work in the fashion industry. Also, the ethical consciousness of the education sector creates a foundation that can translate into bringing students a higher moral value. Apart from that, the interviewees from the education sector act as a trainer for the future of the industry in tackling the child labour problem. Thus, placing importance in these issue through education would create a priority in students would eventually lead to a decline in the issue.

The interview will also include 5 interviewees from the fashion industry who are in a position of decision making. By including interviewees from the position of decision making can translate change into reality, as they are in a position of power. Whereas Hong Kong as plays an important role in the Belt and Road Initiative as a foreign investor in the developing countries as they are known for the T&C industry. Which would eventually help to give an insight of the industry and things that can be flexible to change or amend at the current period, as some things cannot be implemented either due to the way industry runs or the way people perceive the situation in the fashion industry. By interviewing people from the industry, it can give insight into the reality of the industry from a business perspective.

4.3 Data Analysis

The data will be recorded on a digital voice recorder, that can be later on used to clarify our findings and act as a reference for our research. The interviewees will be informed in advance before the interview about the procedure to get their consent, to protect the privacy of the interviewees, and the recording would be destroyed after the completion of the research.

The interviews will be reviewed using the method of coding. The method of coding the data will help make interviewees respond and ideas easier to understand. The allocation of codes to expressions and sentences in every answer helps to capture the response and assists in interpreting the findings of the whole interview more accurately to explain them more clearly.

5. Findings

As mentioned in the sampling method, the interview was conducted with two groups of participants one being the industry personnel and the other being the education sector personnel. Therefore, the participants are named as follows, Industry Sector (IS) and Education Sector (ES). Since the interview consisted of five interviewees from each sector, they would also be categorized as "1-5" to differentiate each participant from the two sectors.

The themes that were recognized after conducting the data analysis to respond to the research questions are 'Profit Leads', 'Affordability', 'Misinformation', 'Essential to Work', 'Risk to Future Generation', 'Openness', 'Supervision' and 'Corporation's Obligation'. The following Figure 2 is an illustration of the themes and the in-depth discussion on the themes.

Figure 2: Themes of 'Profit Leads', 'Affordability', 'Misinformation', 'Essential to Work', 'Risk to Future Generation', 'Openness', 'Supervision' and 'Corporation's Obligation'



Impact of child labour on the local economy

Essential to Work

The Necessities of Children to Work
Children work to meet financial needs

The Poor Conditions Compels to Relax the Policies
Difficult for the authorities to provide support for the children

Risk to the future Generation

Child Labour is Unacceptable
Children should not work under any circumstances

Hazards to Children
Can pose long-term mental and physical damage

Influence of Business Opportunity (BRI) on Child Labour

Openness

Transparency
Being open with the process

Smart Consumerism
Research before purchase

Supervision

Provide Factories Opportunities
Not to boycott factories

Offer Assistance
Give advice to improve

Certification
Clean record

Monitored Process
Oversee supply chain

Corporation's Obligation

The Practice of Brands
Good practice helps

Ethical Fashion
Fair exchange

5.1 Theme 1: Profit Leads

The theme, Profit Leads, was found while analysing the transcript of the interview, which majority of the participants from the Education Sector and Industry Sector mentioned child labour is acceptable with conditions to protect them, which goes to show that most are more concern about the profit when an issue like child labour is on the question. This theme helps to answer our first research question, which is regarding the reasons for manufacturers to hire children in their workforce. Many companies in order to make a huge amount of profit tend to hire children to reduce cost (Hainmueller et al., 2015). Therefore, it can be seen that the issue of child labour can be linked to the demand for child workers in the industry to reduce cost and gain profit even if it is for a short-term basis.

5.1.1 *Child labour is Acceptable with Conditions*

One of the main thing that was discovered through the interview process was that many participants believe that child labour is acceptable with certain conditions, implying mostly towards the child safety and giving the children the right to receive an education while working.

As shared by Education Sector's participant 1:

They [children] still can go to school, then they spend so many hours then they still get their education but then, outside of school hours because you know the family needs, that they are allowed to work a limited number of hours, using child labour doesn't bother me so much if they use it properly as I mean you know kids should have the time to play rather than work but if this is what you know what the family requires you know for the better living of the family that is to be acceptable.

As shared by Industry Sector's participant 1:

Example like Bangladesh, if some people are suffering from insufficient resources suffering hunger and suffering, then I think a fairly paid work is better than nothing to do. This indicates that children's safety and the right to education is important as many times you cannot stop the children from working, especially when it comes to the developing countries, where conditions are desperate. Allowing the children to work while being able to cope with their educational needs is what most participants agree on as it would benefit the children to maintain the household income of their family while suffering less from hardships.

Education Sector's participant 4 states:

However, my concern is "abuse", such as long working hours, poor working conditions and whether they are underpaid. If they work in a sweat-free environment with acceptable working hours, say 4-6, that would be fine.

Education Sector's participant 5 states:

Would be good provided that the child whatever they're doing is in a safe condition The true cause is the family is really very poor or they just don't have the chance to go to school then there is no use for the child just to play around going up and down the mountains and doing things in an unconscious way so if this is the case then I think child labour is acceptable I think that is the misunderstanding as some people they are diehard and they just believe kids don't have to work. The finding is that the majority of participants from the education sector believed that children should be allowed to work, given the fact that the majority of them are living in developing countries, lacking the resources provided by their authorities to cope with their day

to day needs. As a result, it becomes crucial for children to also work with their parents to support family needs.

5.1.2 Profit over Child Labour

During the data analysis, it was also discovered that many participants believed that some manufacturers and companies rarely care about the child labour issue and it is many times overlooked by the profit gains of the parties involved in the process.

As stated by Education Sector's participant 3:

There are some bad entrepreneurs that do not care about child labour issues sometimes because they find that they want to get cheap labour. WTO one is that the demand from suppliers causes the keen and composition of the factories suppliers and it suppresses the cost of the product in order to earn some money the factories employ some cheap labour so sometimes kids labour will be the best choice.

As stated by Industry Sector's participant 2:

Most of them will consider when having the child labour, their profit will increase as they only need to pay a little for production, also, they think the child labour will more easy to control. This implies that some of the business focuses more on the profit gains rather than the ethical issue, which the vulnerability of the children, which many do not have a choice not to work become are great prey for the business to use their for the little price compared to adult workers, enabling the manufactures much easier to hire children.

5.2 Theme 2: Affordability

When taking into account the research question as to why the measures are taken to prevent the issue of child labour failed. The theme, Affordability was discovered. This theme was founded when analysing the data that majority of the time consumers seek for affordability, which then makes companies bring up different ways to provide that price range while earning a profit and that means can highly be susceptible to use child labour in their process. Which indicates that brands that highly price-driven can seem extremely suspicious to be using child labour to reduce cost and gain profit, which results in measures taken to prevent the issue to be not comprehensive.

5.2.1 Consumers Seek Affordability

There have been many measures taken by different parties such as the government bodies of developing countries and the International Labour Organisation. However, sometimes these measures tend not to work to prevent the child labour issue. As many times consumers are seen

to be the main problem for the issue to prevail in the first place. Many consumers do not have the means to afford clothes from companies that ensure their supply chain is ethically sourced.

As stated by Education Sector's participant 1:

It is always down to the consumer it comes down to the affordability and I always say it's like when some clothes when they are at a low price, has a much bigger market is because people who can't afford to buy cheap things for who cannot afford a lot of money on clothing they can buy cheap things whereas the reverse for expensive clothing only certain people can afford it whether or not if it's worthwhile it's some people need to buy at that price point otherwise

As stated by Industry Sector's participant 3:

Consumer is not willing to pay a higher price. As seen by the comments from the interviewees, many times consumers are not able to afford clothes that are ethically produced and ensure the consumer that child workers are not incorporated in the process. However, it is also seen that many consumers just simply are not willing to pay a higher price to have the label of 'child labour' free garment. Consumers play a huge role in whether the measures taken to prevent the issue of child labour is successful or not as they are the one to decide whether to prevent the issue of getting the benefit of paying less money for their product.

5.2.2 Price Driven-Brands

It was also analysed in the interview that price driven-brands are also in demand in the market, making them also a contributing factor for the failure of measures taken to tackle as some price driven-brands do not comply with the laws of ethics.

As stated by Education Sector's participant 1:

If I look at the red flag then there is a high chance that could happen to fast fashion business unfortunately if there is any situation that you can get things very fast and very cheap then it just makes it more prone to use child labour or like using child labour unfairly or you see when you work in a very lean margin then where are you going to use the money from for price point were driven brands and being very fast shortly timed and low price what better option do you have then you use child labour because yes they are cheaper okay they are illegal so they are not subject to minimum wage and you want it really far so they are always available. Unfortunately, price point or driven brands compare to pricing and very shortly timed retailers could possibly represent the red flags.

As stated by Education Sector's participant 3:

If I'm buying from the low-level mass market then I don't know their sources and I doubt they care about the ethical issue. Maybe the red flags are correlated to the brand level to the image.

As stated by Industry Sector's participant 4:

Poor fabric quality & poor workmanship, Fashion industry wants to lower garment cost in order to raise up the profit margin. As mentioned by most of the participants that lower price brands or brands that emphasis on giving the consumer the best or the lowest price can seem very suspicious in terms of using unethical labours in their supply chain, such as child labour. This indicates that price driven-brands has a higher chance of unethical labour willing or unwillingly as many times to reduce the cost they outsource to different contractors without really checking them to save cost, and these subcontractors may not comply with the labour laws, which can be because they are working in smaller location or are hiding the real workers from the companies.

5.3 Theme 3: Misinformation

The misinformation was also a theme that was founded during the analysis of data. This also resonates with the reasons as to why measures fail to prevent the problem of child labour. Majority of the time consumers have a misconception or lack of awareness of the issue. Therefore, most of them do not think as to how their purchasing behaviour may affect or worsen the problem of child labour in the long run, making the issues that were taken to fail in the end.

5.3.1 Misconception of Consumers

Consumers have the tendency to have misconceptions on the issue, it can be because most news is coming from multiple sources and it can be extremely overwhelming to process so much information, and not knowing which information is credible or not.

As stated by Education Sector's participant 1:

I think I would say the fashion industry It's quite notorious in that I think in general people are not in the industry or who have not been working with some of the brands for example and then they gather a lot of news and things like press and social media. I think that they do think that the fashion industry is one of the industry that useless child labour, some people see shopping as really their gratification or you know as we say shopping therapy so people sort of becoming happier from shopping that happens then I would say yes things are cheaper than they can buy frequently then they might be happier to a point where they realise that there is too much to handle at home.

As stated by Education Sector's participant 3:

I don't think customer understand that if they buy more it will cause a lot of problem with kid labour as many of them don't think the correlation between child labour and their purchasing behaviour. Many people think that ethical equals to environmentally friendly and forget other elements such as the human right working condition fair treatment fair trade fair salary package fair opportunities and the right of speech and also the right of society like the union right and the working hours' sexual harassment and discrimination these are also the ethical issues.

As stated by Industry Sector's participant 1:

Sometimes consumers get the information from the newspaper from the social media somewhere they say they are using child labour or forced labour the only get the information from the first page they don't know there are so many hidden messages and so many hidden facts because you know it is a two direction. I can see the brand from the US market and the European market. They also have the responsibility to prevent something from happening. The fashion sector has always been bombarded with a ton of media coverage regarding corporate social responsibility, most of these media news on the fashion industry is mainly negative, taking especially about the poor condition of work or serious issues like child labour. This indicates that many consumers have prejudice towards the fashion industry being highly infamous for being associated with child labour and that not many steps are taken to tackle the issue. This misconception is also a contributing factor for the failed measures as many consumers do not realise that they are also part of the problem.

5.3.2 Lack of Awareness

While having misconceptions about the issue, many lack awareness altogether. The lack of awareness is highly dangerous as unknowing consumers may be supporting or regularly buying from brands that are producing unethically and are not practising proper corporate responsibility.

As stated by Education Sector's participant 4:

Not many people are aware of this issue and it is a lack of promotion from the mass media.

As stated by Industry Sector's participant 1:

They have to do something like that campaign to arouse people's eyes on this issue is better than something just in the advertisement than a booklet on the store. Being aware of your garment will help increase your awareness and would also compel more news sources to report such news making it difficult for the supplier to further continue with such unethical practices.

Therefore, consumers need to be aware as they are the end purchasers and the one who brings in profit for companies.

5.4 Theme 4: Essential to Work

The theme, Essential to Work, has contributed answers to our research question which discusses the impact of child labour in the local economy. When developing countries are a base for producing garment it helps to increase their GDP which is done by some manufacturers to reduce the cost of manufacturing to attract buyers to invest in the location. Many times manufacturers to reduce their cost and increase their profit would allow children to work, in return that would also benefit the children to earn to support the livelihood of their families.

5.4.1 The Necessities of Children to Work

Even though allowing children to work in the industry which initially helps them earn money to support the livelihood of their families. Since child labour is illegal. Therefore, many times there are no laws to protect working children from abuse and not being paid enough for their hard work. Since many developing countries lack policies to cater to the unprivileged, many times young children need to work with their parents to just be able to afford food for the next day.

As stated by Education Sector's participant 1:

Developing countries surely, for example, Bangladesh I do think people or would be worse off if they are not allowed to engage in employment at all it might mean that there is no food no necessities that they could actually buy or could maintain their daily lives so yes I think if you just think like if you put a straight cross like no child labour or nobody is allowed to work below 18, otherwise it's illegal, and not allowed to work it could be worse off to them to these people.

As stated by Education Sector's participant 2:

It depends on the social welfare of different countries and the financial background of individual families.

As stated by Education Sector's participant 5:

I know that in some parts of the world people are very poor even for the kids they don't have the time and parents don't have the money to send the kids to go to school and if the kids can join the family to do some jobs and help to earn part of the living for the family.

5.4.2 *The Poor Conditions Compels to Relax the Policy*

Since many developing countries lack the means and finance to support and build their country, they are many times compelled to relax their policies to attract foreign investment, especially for the garment industry as the industry requires low-skilled and cheap labour, which many developing countries can provide. Therefore, to earn revenue for the country, the government sacrifices by relaxing the policies to be favourable to foreign investors.

As stated by the Education Sector's participant 1:

But if you are really in a situation where you can't make a living If I don't work then I don't let the children go help out then we might you know live in a horrible environment can't even get water so it's really tough if you look at the countries like Bangladesh then the unemployment rate is very high it's not so easy to get jobs otherwise like or make a living especially in the villages and stuff so why then I guess it's hard and then and how the government might actually give some sort of measures to relax the policy.

As stated by the Education Sector's participant 5:

Countries place cities or villages they are really poor then it is really difficult to prevent child labour.

As stated by the Industry Sector Participant 1:

The main obstacle that I'm thinking the economy is not balancing in the world should be the reason. This initially encourages manufacturers to higher children to work to further reduce their cost and increase their profit income. Many developing countries want to be seen as competitive in price for foreign investors to help increase their GDP even if that means to relax their policy and sacrifice their children with that.

5.5 *Theme 5: Risk to the Future Generation*

The theme, Risk to Future Generation, is a long term effect that would be seen on the local economy. Since many of the children would focus more on their work and very few are able to fully concentrate on their education, making it difficult for them to move up the social ladder in the long run. Not only that, since child labour is not regulated, but children are also more prone to abuse and harassment, this could potentially damage their physical and mental health which could affect their work and personal life in the future.

5.5.1 *Child Labour is Unacceptable*

From my analysis, it was discovered that participants still believe that no matter what the circumstances are child labour is inhuman and unacceptable. It can affect them in ways that

can be extremely difficult to recover from, it would also stray the children away from a normal childhood development which is crucial. Also, children have a high chance of being exploited by their employees.

As stated by the Education Sector's participant 2:

In reality, they are working under appalling conditions that amount to modern-day slavery and the worst forms of child labour". This is an inhuman treatment and it will spoil the life of children. It was pretty surprising to find that only one of the participant believed that child labour is inhuman and the children are treated badly as there is no regulation protecting them, they work secretly, meaning that they are illegal worker, making them more susceptible to harassment.

5.5.2 Hazards to Children

Nevertheless, there are few participants who believe that children working can pose hazards to their health. Which eventually can impact the local economy as it can pose a higher burden on the health care for the children who have been affected by their workplace. Garment factories tend to have massive types of machinery and it can be easy for mishaps to occur.

As stated by Education Sector's participant 1:

If I go buy a product definitely want to make sure that it is not something that is made for my pleasure or something that I can put on myself and make me look good but then this is done with the under the situation where somebody is freedom somebody opportunity to get education somebody is being exploited were used to produce it.

As stated by Education Sector's participant 3:

For the child labour, they might not be able to mentally and physically achieve the tasks that are physically or effectively than they are eventually or they will get hurt. They will not be able to fight for the opportunity and get better treatment from the factory so that is unfair for example wages can be deducted by the company and like some poor treatment provides a poor environment for them. I will only care if that environment will hurt the kids or not, such as washing some products with chemical substances and not providing any protective equipment to them.

5.6 Theme 6: Openness

During the data assessing process, it was discovered that many participants beloved that business can play a huge role in effecting the issue of child labour. As we have seen from previous parts that most developing reduce the cost to attract more foreign investments.

Whereas business is affected by the consumer's opinion, which mainly discusses ethical practice in the industry. Therefore, business opportunities, namely the Belt and Road Initiative can truly influence to bring in more transparency and create an atmosphere for smart consumerism as well.

5.6.1 Transparency

Transparency in the supply chain is crucial to gain the trust of your contactors and from your consumers. It is a practice that can help to create a wider community communication to tackle the issue on a wider platform, while effectively pointing out the wrong practice of different suppliers and factories to then improve their process.

As stated by Education Sector's participant 1:

When brands approve factories they normally say that you are not allowed contractors but if they have contractors it is to be very transparent okay as to who they are.

As stated by Education Sector's participant 5:

It really depends on the company policy I mean the fashion label fashion brand company policy they are to a certain extent they have a radical transparency strategy and communicate with the consumer. This can become extremely dangerous as it leads authorities and decision-makers to potential misuse of their power and overworks the labours without taking care of their needs. Therefore, it is important to bring in more transparency in the supply chain to tackle the issue of child labour so that companies can improve their management structure, without being deprived of their earnings.

5.6.2 Smart Consumerism

Most of the participants agreed that being a smart consumer can potentially change the scene of child labour in the industry as many brands are then forced to be more mindful with the ethical practice when then will put the press on the manufacturer to practice proper labour rights. Therefore, being updated with the issue, and buying products mindfully, while researching the company's background can help consumers to be smarter in terms of choosing their products.

As stated by the Education Sector's participant 2:

Read the report of ILO and annual report of the companies so as to understand the current situation of sustainable supply chain management (SSCM) in the fast fashion industry.

As state by the Education Sector's participant 3:

Consumers must consume or select the product properly and to keep and to find something that is of a better quality to use and to increase the product life-cycle so as to enhance and the using life of their products instead of changing their style frequently. If you ask the consumer about that and they are actually concerned about the ethical issue they understand they know and recognise that this product is produced by an unethical factory then they would not buy from them I can be hundred per cent sure of this.

As stated by the Industry Sector's participant 3:

Don't just buy the cloth just because of fashion. Try to understand what kind of material the cloth is and think this is suitable or not. If you find some product that is extremely cheap with good quality. Then better to think how and where to make it. Consequently, the participants highly encourage consumers to be mindful as its a step in the right direction to create a positive change and prevent the long going culture of child labour in the garment industry production.

5.7 Theme 7: Supervision

Business opportunities can influence the child labour issue in the developing country. Since the BRI highly focuses on cooperation between different parties, it can influence the way businesses collaborate and supervise different levels of production in the garment factories. From the data, it was discovered that most participants believed that supervision is important and it plays a form of cooperation between different parties to cope with ethical issues like child labour. In the following parts, there will be an in-depth discussion on the theme of supervision.

5.7.1 Provide Factories Opportunities

A few of the participants believed that it is important to give opportunities to factories to improve their progress, as it can make them realise the mistake and do better in the future. In case the factories are boycotted altogether it can cause chaos, while many people will lose their daily income to support their livelihood.

As stated by Education Sector's participant 1:

Instead of sort of like banning them[factories] immediately they would spend the time to explain to them so they would get a different rating, all of them get educated first so as to during the vendor selection process we always express to the vendors what is our requirement what's our expectations and so they are things like okay age group child labour what age and what are our principal's things, definitely the factories need to be trained and so what we realise is that the vendors actually appreciate this partnership.

As stated by Education Sector's participant 3:

Get some subsidies from the government or overseas company so get some voluntary from NGOs I mean I hope this kind of policies can help children go back to the right places like school like kindergarten like their family so I think both of this issue and measures should go together in order to help eliminate the number of kids working in the factory.

As stated by Industry Sector's participant 2:

They[contractors] should take upon themselves to educate the suppliers on ethical issues. This implies that factories has been given a chance to change their ways, therefore, factories should also be given the opportunity to change the way they deal with child labour, give them more time to hire proper labour for the job, who are not underaged. With that, giving a chance should be given in consideration of the way the factories deal with the problem, if they are still seen to be continuously using underage children for manufacturing then it should be of no question to blacklist those factories.

5.7.2 Offer Assistance

Giving factories an opportunity to improve would be the starting stage, it is also the responsibility of the companies to offer assistance to point those factories in the right direction. It is crucial for brands to communicate with their factories and give them the guideline and to explain the importance of those guidelines. Since many factories may not understand the severity of their actions.

As stated by Education Sector's participant 1:

Instead of sort of like banning them[factories] immediately they[contractors] would spend the time to explain to them so they would get a different rating all of them get educated first so as to during the vendor selection process we always express to the vendors what is our requirement what's our expectations and so they are things like okay age group child labour what age and what are our principals' things, definitely the factories need to be trained and so what we realise is that the vendors actually appreciate this partnership.

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As stated by Industry Sector's participant 2:

They[contractors] should take upon themselves to educate the suppliers on ethical issues. Retailers must bear responsibility for contractor working practices. Hence, it becomes important for retailers to offer assistance to factories, as it can help to further increase the safety of the workers and decrease the practice of unethical labour usage.

5.7.3 Certification

Some of the participants also suggested that providing a form of certification to prove that child labour is not taking place in their factories can be proven beneficial in the long run. As it makes retailers sure that they are not part of the problem to cause child labour practices. Certification would also increase the standard of the workforce in the developing countries, initially providing enough to sustain the adult workers, as wage issues have been a long problem in the developing countries.

As stated by the Education Sector's participant 3:

Have a clean record on child labour or they have that approval certificate or license may be or trademark license. These kinds of certificate no matter how many or too many garments the consumer buy from them they would be much more not to worry when they buy part of from that manufacturer that they might be using child labour. Testing lab to do some accreditation for factories. I think this is visible because a lot of companies do this kind of auditing to meet their compliance. A factory audit is not effective this way if you disclosed the audit date to them. So do some anonymous testing or inspection like a sudden inspection.

As stated by the Education Sector's participant 4:

The label should indicate their products are manufactured in sweat-free factories on their garment labels. This indicates that there are people who are trying to push forward the use of certification to be more sure that unethical practices are at bay. Nevertheless, it would still take time to push this certification forwards and this could be a new way in the supply chain of the garment industry.

5.7.4 Monitored Process

Since the certification of providing child labour is still in the process. Some of the participants highly urge the retailers to monitor the whole process of the supply chain to ensure that their brands are not connected or are indirectly supporting the unethical practice of child labour.

As stated by the Education Sector's participant 1:

Corporate responsibility team that checks on all the suppliers you know as to very details into how they actually manage the production process and I think that has to see an in the priority. Many subcontractors so for example for a printed logo T-shirt they have a factory that does the cutting fabric cutting and then it was sent to another factory for the printing and then sent to another factory to do the sewing and probably they need to go to like four or five factories to produce one category so imagine this is to be very difficult when something is actually talking about developed countries how do you monitor and some of the factories so-called was actually realised it was somebody's residence and how do you monitor the child labour.

As stated by the Education Sector's participant 3:

We have to get the help from the government especially for the labour department the trade department have to put more resources to allocate a team or to get some frequent inspection to the factory and offer a great and huge penalty against this law. It is quite common for retailers to assume that factories would know the laws and regulation. Thus, many do not find it a need to monitor the process, which can also cost extra financial cost for the company. Nevertheless, abusing human right laws is seen to be common in developing nations. Therefore, companies should invest time and money to ensure that their brand does not indirectly support child labour.

5.8 Theme 8: Corporation's Obligation

In addition to that, many of the participants also believed that it is a corporation's obligation to ensure unethical practices, namely the child labour should be under their control. Business opportunities, such as the BRI can bring light into the corporation's obligation, Since the BRI emphasis on the practice of sustainability, it can help make business realise and push them to further practice their obligation, which can help prevent the issue, namely the child labour to be prevented in the future.

5.8.1 The Practice of Brands

Almost half of the participants believed that the practice of the brands is crucial, as their practice will be the by-product. When a brand is ethically conscious, the by-product of that would be benefitting the brands and the spirit as a whole. However, when a brand does not comply with the brand ethics it can severely damage the brand and the society around it. The thing that was founded after analysing the data, that most of the participants have mentioned that western brands emphasize highly on the human rights issue and would terminate any order if there was speculation regarding child labours in the factories.

As stated by the Education Sector's participant 1:

I know the American brands they are they General very strict about this so for example if they see something that is wrong I don't know then they got to stop immediately okay so you got to stop production immediately are you are not going to get any of my orders so very strict penalty or sometimes even fine so what happens is that it's very good that you sort of like minister you're rules and regulations.

As stated by the Education Sector's participant 2:

American Apparel strives to attract young mainstream consumers by producing fashionable clothes. The principle is to source garments ethically while providing good working standards and conditions to workers and to provide a sustainable business model in the clothes' country of origin. A responsible company should follow the direction of sustainability in order to protect our environment and the next generation. When I worked in H&M as a business controller, our company cares about the ethical issue, our suppliers are not allowed to use child labour and be outsourced. Otherwise, the ranking of the suppliers would be downgraded or even blacklisted.

As stated by the Industry Sector's participant 1:

The brand needs to set up some regulations to all its vendors and to all its suppliers. When a company makes it a purpose to generate practices that can both benefit the business and the society it can create a sense of responsibility, further boosting the company, eventually leading consumers to support the brand with their cause.

5.8.2 Ethical Fashion

With that, ethical fashion can also be influenced by the business opportunities that are led by the Belt and Road Initiative. As mentioned by the OECD (2021), Belt and Road Initiative can impactfully influence the sustainable fashion industry by promoting an ecosystem of sustainability in the process of the supply chain. Hence, is it important for business opportunities to push forward the idea of ethical fashion, focusing also on the labour issues, namely the child labour, instead of only catering to the sustainability of the environmental impact the fashion industry prompts. Both the participants from the education and industry sector emphasis on ethics.

As stated by the Education Sector's participant 2:

Ethical fashion can be defined as fashionable clothes that incorporate fair trade principles with sweatshop-free labour conditions while not harming the environment or workers by using biodegradable and organic cotton. Ethical behaviour in business practice is essential to

prevent the occurrence of any misconduct such as hidden the fact of employing child labour, raising the prices on a whim, to hide the goods to price manipulation and cheating customers.

As stated by the Industry Sector's participant 2:

The standard level of the ethical then I think most of the Europe and US customers would not do business with such manufacturers but it depends on the level how deep of the level, for example, H&M, their standards sometimes fluctuate rather than Ralph Lauren's. It is not easy to standardise in one standard.

As stated by the Industry Sector's participant 3:

Consciousness is the inborn energy, which perceives and responds to situations. Ethics is the bundle of knowledge, which is processed, bundled by man and offered to fellow beings as some principles in behaviour to follow in daily lives. Many participants think that It is a hard reality that it can be difficult for every brand to follow such rules, not every brand has the means and resources to spend on ethical fashion and making sure their production line is perfect. However, taking small steps into your business environment would help as a whole in the future to increase sustainability practice.

6 Discussion

The research among the participants had answered the research question which was put forward in this study. The first question was discussing the reasons manufacturers hire children, which was answered by the participants that the main thing is simply profit gains that are earned when hiring children compared to an adult. Also, measures are being failed to prevent the issues that are the cause of misinformation on the topic and the behaviour of consumers, as many would simply want cheaper clothes without thinking of the repercussions. Most of the participants believed that it is a necessity for children to work, as there is a lack of means provided by the local government to support the finance of the poor. Apart from that, the participants agreed that business can influence the child labour issue. As business opportunities can bring about transparency into the supply chain creating supervision of the workflow while making companies realise their obligation towards ethical practices.

The research found that the majority of the participants from the educator sector and the industry sector has similar views when it comes to the topic of child labour. As founded in the research the participants had a different age to what they considered as the age that is seen to be considered child labour. However, all of them believed that children under the age of 12 are seen to be considered as child labour. The interesting thing was that all of the educator sector's participants believed that age under 16 years would be considered as child labour. On the other hand, participants from the industry sector considered children under the age of 12 years are considered as child labour. Every participant had different age numbers, as to what they thought

child labour age was. Nevertheless, participants from the industry sector seem to believe that above the age of 12 should not be considered as child labour. This shows the conflict of opinions within the industry as everyone has a different idea of what age a child should be considered illegal to work. This can be one of the major reasons it can become difficult to prevent the child labour issue, there is a lack of consensus between different parties of the same industry.

The thing that was unexpected during the conducting of the interview and the data analysis that the majority of the participants are fine with children working as long as they are in a safe environment. This was the result that was not expected during the conducting of the interview. Given that, almost everyone who knows about the issue of child labour knows that this is not regulated and children are highly vulnerable to being exploited. Despite that, participants in the education sector and some from the industry seem to be fine with the practice of hiring children in labour work sound a bit inhuman and uncalled for. Some of the participants do argue that the children many times do not have a choice not to work given the lack of financial aid in the family, and working may be the only way to support the livelihood of the family. Therefore, this can be one of the biggest restraints to the policies that are being taken to prevent the issue altogether. There should be campaigns and scheme that supports the livelihood of those children and their family in need and support their education in return, that would be one of the ways the policies to prevent the practice of child labour. Personnel in the industry and education sector should also realise that as much as we focus on the environmental issues in our society, human rights are as well crucial for the growth of our society.

Nevertheless, both sectors of the participants urged the importance of transparency in the supply chain. The participants believed that transparency can bring the industry into the right track to deal with child labour. Which is important as it would then urge the brands to take stricter measures to cope with the issues. Also, both sectors of the participants commented that brands that are driven by providing lower price products to their consumers can be seen as a red flag to use unethical practice. As it can be difficult for price driven-brands to provide a cheaper price of clothing and still manage to get profit in return can be seen as extremely suspicious. Therefore, we need to look into the brand before buying the product, we are also part of the problem.

Apart from that, both groups of participants also suggested that it is important to delve into ethical fashion practices. They believed that ethical practices of fashion can bring chances into the perception of brands and consumers. It is a way to move forward to create a society where there is a lack of waste and human practices in the manufacturing process. It is crucial to practice slow fashion, where these practices slow down the production and consumption of pf resources. This practice of slowing the fast-fashion down would eventually help to reduce the harmful impact caused by the fast-fashion industry (Kim and Oh, 2020). Therefore, the implementation of slow fashion in the industry and into the daily life of consumers can bring about positive change into the fashion industry.

Nevertheless, one of the key difference that was founded among the educator and the industry personnel was that educators did put a tough into the ways the fashion industry can improve their management system, namely implementable certification to provide us with a proof that children were not used in the process or brand focusing more on the process of their supply chain by monitoring the production step by step. Whereas industry personnel mainly suggested the consumers should be more mindful in their decision making and should do the research of the brand before buying the goods. This shows one of the key contradiction of thinking, which is that the industry personal emphasised more on the behaviour of consumers to affect the changes in the industry, while the educators believed that it is important for the industry to bring in change before anyone can point fingers at them, as it can tarnish the business altogether. Which will eventually cause loss of reputation for the brand that can be next to impossible to recover from.

7. Conclusion

Children who are part of the garment industry enjoy doing the garment work, the children found it fascinating (Zaman et al., 2014). This goes to show that children do not understand when they are being exploited for others gain, they seem to see work as a playtime, making them vulnerable in dangerous situations. Apart from that, it was also discovered form the participants that most of the time consumers simply look for affordable clothes, they do not think to an extent that their purchasing habit can affect people's lives, they would generally assume that companies should be the one tackling such issues. Nevertheless, companies can only tackle the issue when they start spending more on the monitoring process of their product which would add cost and be shown in their final product. Which goes to show a lack of awareness of the severity and correlation of the situation to consumers purchasing habits is important.

Child labour is truly an inhuman process to get profit gains exploiting the hard work of children. It is important to create an environment where children can thrive through education, not hard labour. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (2021), one of the most important goals of the SDG is to create an environment where child labour would be eliminated in every condition by the year 2025. Through giving importance to eliminating child labour is critical for a modern society. Through the SDG, it can help create a discussion where child labour is discussed over different forms of mediums, namely education, training and consumer awareness.

Us as a society need to protect children, the workplace can severely damage their physical and mental well-being, which can cause long-term damage that may not be reversed. It can affect their studies as they would be exhausted with the work, lacking the time to focus on their education, and would probably take up the job full time once they are the legal age of work, making it almost impossible to move up the social ladder in society. Nevertheless, when children work, they take up the jobs of adult workers, making adult workers earn little or be

out of jobs, as children are much easier to manipulate and to convince them when compared to an adult labourer.

Consequently, measures should be taken to prevent the child labour issue. During the data analysis, some of the participants suggested that transparency in the supply chain is important. It can provide the consumer with abundant amounts of information, making brands and manufacturers rethink their ethical standards. Apart from that, consumers need to take time out to reevaluate their purchasing behaviour as they have the power to create change. Also, introduction a form of certificate to prove that child labour was not used during the production process would be a great form of prevention. However, this form of certification has a long way to go, parties need to spend to make this possible, which will cost money and time, making it not visible for now. Nevertheless, monitoring the process and penalising accordingly can be an effective solution to prevent the issue for the time being. When measures are taken to prevent the child labour issue it can bring a healthy childhood for the children, which can eventually help them to move up the social ladder as they would spend more time on their education rather than working. It will eventually lead the companies to pay fairly to their adult labour workers.

Despite that, some situations can interfere with the measures to be effective. The first being that the lack of financial aid from authorities. When children stop working they need a mean of income to support their family, if their parents are not able to earn enough and they are not getting financial aid from the authorities, it is easy for them to drive back into the path of child workers. Moreover, companies need to be serious with their CSR practice, if companies are not obliged with their claim there are high chances for middlemen to take advantage of the situation. Lastly, many companies when they give the contract to factories, most of the factories sub-contract to a different location, and they are difficult to monitor, companies to need plan out proper terms and conditions in their contract for factories to follow so that they are not supporting the use of child labour indirectly.

The limitations of this study are that it only focuses on the child labour issues of the fashion industry, making it difficult to examine the child labour issue in various industries. With that, there are many more developing countries that are now engaging in a fashion distribution network through the Belt and Road Initiative. As a result, making it difficult to find a universal solution to avoid the exploitation of children in every developing nation, as every country has different cultural values making it difficult to apply a similar method everywhere. Another limitation of this study is that even though the BRI focuses a lot on corporate social responsibility it can be difficult for this study to guide them as the study is not done on a large scale making the study limited. Apart from that, the BRI is relatively new business opportunities. Therefore, not much information or study has been conducted that would connect this initiative with the ongoing issue of child labour in the fashion industry. Moreover, the lack of time and resources is also a contributing factor to the research limitation of this study.



The suggestion for future research on this topic would be interviewing on a larger scale. It would give more insights into the perception of the industry personnel and also creating an insight into the consumers. We would also suggest investigating the situation in the developing countries where child labour is more prone to be found it can create a comprehensive review of the situation of the children working in the garment industry. For future research, it would also be effective if taken the time to research the mind of consumers as to the reasons for buying cheaper clothing even after knowing the consequences as to their psychology of it.

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