

## **Fast Fashion: Challenging the Rights of Women Garment Workers**

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*This paper examines the intersectional harms women garment workers face within offshoring and global production. With the rise of fast fashion, women garment workers have increased their workload, but their wages have stayed the same. The international community has presented binding international labor laws to cut down on the harm occurring within the factories. However, the current legal systems have not adequately provided women with rights or equal rights as male workers. The creation of unions has been important for women garment workers to advocate for their rights, but unions are often shot down if they become too powerful. The impending consequences of climate change have led women garment workers to extreme poverty and environmental harm. Furthermore, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have cut women out of working in general and caused women to fall deeper into the realms of poverty.*

The garment industry is one of the largest global industries with the majority being comprised of women from South Asian countries (Jackson et al., 2020). The Asia Pacific sector of the garment industry makes up 70% of the global garment industry with 65 million workers (Jackson et al., 2020). Every country has different ranges of women working in the garment industry, but overall it is estimated women make up 80% of the sector (Meier, 2021). Although more women entering the work force tends to expand their rights, women garment workers face multiple rights violations when at work.

Historically, women have worked in textiles (Freeman, 2010). Once industrialization started to grow and women entered the work force, their first place was in the garment industry. The garment sector was often vital for the economics of countries first starting to develop. The gendered nature of labor within cultures allotted for women to move into garment work (Iqbal, 2020). While men do have roles within the garment factories, they are in positions of power and watch over the women as supervisors (Bender, 2003).

Men being in positions of power creates a patriarchal work structure where the focus is to make money for the company (Iqbal, 2020); therefore, the rights of women garment workers are not upheld

or respected. Women are forced to work long hours without being paid overtime, lack access to health benefits like insurance or maternity leave, and face sexual harassment by men in charge. Since women garment workers are placed within low-ranking positions in the factory, they are exposed to harsh chemicals and have high risk of being injured on the job. It is hard to feed themselves and their families while trying to unionize under the patriarchal hierarchical structure of the factories (Corradini, 2018).

The fast fashion industry has steadily increased from 1990-2010 with the industry seeing a rise of 60% in the last 15 years of Global North consumption (Meier, 2021). The rise in use of social media globally, alongside the rapidly increasing world population, has caused copious new fast fashion companies to emerge. In 2019, the world consumed 60 million metric tons of clothing; if consumption rates follow the same pattern, in 10 years the world will consume 102 million metric tons a year (World Bank, 2019). As fast fashion companies continue to multiply, the more women workers in the garment industry struggle to survive as the wages they receive keep them impoverished. Climate change is creating more challenges to women working in the garment sector (Anderson Hoffner et al., 2021). According to the World Bank (2019), at the current rate fast fashion greenhouse emissions will grow 50% by 2030. Garment factories operate within countries that are at risk of deathly impacts because of climate change and only further the pollution of local water, creating health problems for the community and the women garment workers. As Western consumption continues to grow, the farther the image of the women making the clothes slips from the grasp of Western consumers.

In this paper, I argue that high levels of consumption from global North countries have perpetuated violations of human rights for women garment workers. Notably, Article 23(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states that everyone has the right to work, choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment (United Nations, 1948). First, I will analyze the historical context of the apparel industry and how production became global. This section will also include the legal framework of labor rights and the overall framework of human rights. Next, I will address what rights are being violated for women, followed by climate change impacts created by the garment industry and how these impacts effect the workers. Then, I will examine the impacts of COVID-19 and offer the case study of Bangladesh. Finally, I will look towards the future and recommend ways corporations and individuals should change their ways of consuming and producing.

## **Historical Overview of the Global Apparel Industry**

The garment industry has not always operated on a global scale. Early global production started in the 1950s, but global production became more popular towards the end of the twentieth century (Collins, 2002). Before the apparel industry expanded globally, the United States garment factories employed marginalized groups and exploited migrants for cheap labor in awful working conditions (Bender, 2003). The largest industrial city in the United States during the twentieth century was New York, and the most remembered garment accident on United States soil happened in early 1911. The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire killed around 150 workers, comprised of immigrant women (Green, 2003). After the fire, new safety codes within garment factories were created and garment workers joined together to form labor unions. There were labor movements such as the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) (Green, 2003). Once unionization happened in Northern states, garment factories relocated to the South where lower wages were more acceptable. However, federal laws, such as the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), regulated how labor was produced within the United States. The Fair Labor Standards Act established minimum wage, prevention of youth labor, and the enforcement of record books documenting hours. As federal labor laws were passed, unions became more powerful within the United States (Soyer, 2005). In the 1960s, beginning stages of offshore production, the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union sued Quality Manufacturing Company for firing a woman wrongfully. The court voted in favor of the union and stated that Quality Manufacturing had disrespected the woman's individual rights as a worker and was in violation of the National Labor Relations Act (Soyer, 2005). This court case solidified the movement to offshore production in the garment industry as federal laws would not permit the amount of production needed for the increasing demand (Chinen, 1996).

Fashion companies moved their factories to developing countries, and now almost all garment production is produced offshore (Bonacich & Appelbaum, 2003). Since these countries were growing and industrializing, the garment industry provided a cheap way to increase the economic sector because garment production does not require enormous amounts of start-up funds (Bonacich & Appelbaum, 2003). Garment factories settled within the multiple countries globally, but the biggest exporters are located within east Asian countries such as Bangladesh, China, Hong Kong, and Sri Lanka (Bonacich & Appelbaum 2003).

The beginning of the twenty-first century brought along even faster production in the factories through fast fashion. Fast fashion is the process of making clothes at a fast rate focusing less on quality and more on quantity, hence making the overall garment easily replaceable so consumers buy more

frequently (World Bank, 2019). Fashion brands started creating more seasons, overall mimicking runway fashion but making more affordable options to middle-low class consumers in the Global North. Instead of wearing clothes that were appropriate for the weather and re-wearing those multiple times a season, consumers have been conditioned and persuaded to buy each time the company releases new clothes (World Bank, 2019). The fast pace of fashion brands constantly restocking inventory of new clothes every week pushed the consumer to consume more each year. According to World Bank (2019) in 2000, the world produced 500 million new garments a year; 20 years later, the production amount has doubled.

The garment industry is immense and encompasses different global ethical issues. Therefore, there are multiple international organizations involved in observing and condemning certain practices that persist within the industry. The International Labor Organization (ILO) does not enforce any laws; however, it is an organization to promote labor and worker rights when they are being repressed in societies. There are different organizations that combat the violations produced by the garment industry. The UN Alliance For Sustainable Fashion and its partner agencies, including UNEP, the ILO, and the World Bank Group, have been supporting coordinated action in the fashion sector to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals since March 2019. Each governmental state has its own enforcement and laws surrounding labor rights, but most states have signed or ratified certain human rights conventions that bind them to align with fundamental workers' rights.

Although the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (see United Nations, 1948) is not a legally binding document, it is still important in recognizing the international rights norms in our global society. The rights abuses women face in the garment factory often center on Articles 23, 24, and 25 of the UDHR. Article 23(1) states everyone has the right to work, free just employment, and to just and favorable working conditions. Everyone has the right to equal pay without discrimination, and everyone has the right to just and favorable remuneration ensuring oneself or one's family to live in human dignity. Lastly, everyone has the right to form and join a union for the protection of one's interests. Article 24 of the UDHR states everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay. Article 25 of the UDHR states that everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of oneself and one's family so this includes food, housing, clothing, medical care and social services that provide the right to security in event of unemployment, sickness, or disability (United Nations, 1948). Yet as this paper will illustrate, these rights are often not enjoyed by women working in the garment factory.

Alongside the United Nations, there are other international organizations that promote the integration of “decent work” into the garment industry. The ILO was established in 1919, and it creates conventions, accompanying recommendations, on what labor rights should be respected globally (Better Work, 2019). There are eight ILO conventions that represent the fundamental labor standards that protect workers’ rights. The core fundamentals protect against discrimination, child labor, and the elimination of forced labor. These conventions are legally binding documents for states and mandatory reporting is required to ensure factories enforce labor rights and uphold the ratified conventions (Matsuura & Teng, 2020). The ILO convention 190 addresses the specific violence and harassment in the textiles, clothing, leather, footwear sector. The ILO is aware of the gendered violence within the garment industry and has started implementing the concept of “decent work” to maintain a safe working space that inherently promotes and protects the rights of workers. A space that promotes decent work will inherently produce more productive work because workers’ rights are being respected and heard. Decent work is especially important for states to adapt because women in the garment industry face sexual harassment and violence at high rates. However, global corporations fail to enforce the codes they should be following because the actual threat of legal action is low (Better Work, 2019).

### **Specific Challenges Women Face**

Women make up estimated 80% of the workforce for textiles and apparel (Anderson Hoffner et al., 2021). Women working in textiles has become a naturalized gender phenomenon in multiple societies and cultures, making it difficult for women to advocate for themselves (Freeman, 2010). The naturalization of women working in apparel industry stems from the social construction of gender that women are biologically and psychologically different than men (Rosen, 2002). Therefore, because women have smaller dainty hands and sew clothing for their family, the ideal of women working with clothing became widely accepted as something women must be good at (Freeman, 2010). Another argument for women making up most of the garment sector is that since women are less intelligent than men, they cannot work at jobs that required intellectual thinking (Rosen, 2002). However, garment labor has been reduced to unskilled labor because of how fast women produce garments. Before the rise of fast fashion, women dedicated time to making clothing that would be durable and they produced garments that required expert skill to make (Chinen, 1996). Since factories are only concerned about meeting quotas, women workers need to produce so many garments per minute – the emphasis is on quantity rather than quality. Increasing the speed of production reduces the skilled labor women once possessed and enforces the capitalistic production timeline. Once the demand for clothing began to

expand, women stayed in the same role of making clothes but never gained leadership status within the factories.

Sexual harassment from male workers to female workers is highly present within all forms of textile and apparel work. In 2019, the Centenary International Labor Conference created new procedures on how to deal with sexual violence and harassment within a workplace. In garment factories there can be a patriarchal hierarchy with men holding supervisor or manager positions while the women do the brunt of the work (Better Work, 2017). The men use the power to their advantage and harass the women for sexual favors in reward to meet a quota, for money, or for better treatment within the factory. The forms of harassment women face in factories ranges from sexual innuendos, inappropriate touching, and coercion into sexual acts. Twenty-two percent of women in Cambodia's garment and footwear industry said they had been forced into quid pro quo sexual harassment. Garment factories that pay women by the piece report higher sexual harassment (Better Work, 2017). Sexual harassment effects the productivity of the women working, but also effects how well women can communicate their problems within the factory, as being violated at work can create psychological trauma associated with the factory. Furthermore, women working within the industry face violence in their home more frequently than women who do not work (Anderson Hoffner et al., 2021).

Women continue to receive unfair wages that are unequal to their male counterparts. Although there are labor conventions promoting equally distributed income, companies still participate in unlawful labor practices of paying their workers (Iqbal, 2020). Such wages do not allow women enough money to uplift themselves out of poverty or to better their living conditions. The garment industry preys upon women living in poverty by giving them an opportunity to make money. However, women living in poverty do not receive enough education, and, because of their status as women, they lack the ability to advance within the hierarchy of the factory. Immigrant women also make up around 70% of the labor force for global garment industries (Iqbal, 2020). Being an immigrant means the work is undocumented and the woman is most likely paid under the table. It can be difficult to advocate for better pay when there are little international conventions aiding the rights to undocumented work. Garment factories offer impoverished women jobs, but the job does not provide women adequate wages to pave their way out of poverty. Additionally, the violence women face daily from working in the factory traps women within the cycle of poverty (Asian Floor Wage Alliance, 2021).

The placement of garment factories within the Global South is purposeful. Global North countries have persisting gender inequalities within the labor force but with more resources for women to unionize. However, in the Global South it can be difficult for women to advocate for their rights since

the government tends to ignore women rights to work. The societal construction that women are inferior to men creates a perfect environment for inequality within a factory to thrive. Therefore, if women garment workers were to claim the factory is violating their rights, women voices are not heard. Women garment workers have the right to form and join trade unions for the protection of their interests (United Nations, 1948). Women who have tried to form labor unions faced immense backlash from male managers or bosses, and the punishment can be physical abuse or being fired. Male managers fear that when women together, they can talk about all the injustices they face in the workplace. Especially as women experience sexual abuse and harassment daily, forming a union would be beneficial for women to protect themselves, yet the companies threaten women with violence. If women started to form labor unions, the women would be able to mobilize worker strikes or protests that would bring awareness globally to the realities women garment workers face daily to produce the clothing for the Global North. Unions would guarantee that women rights were protected and that their autonomy is respected within the factory (Paton, 2020). Being in a union would also allow for women to challenge the male authority without the threat of one-on-one harassment. However, unions get shot down quickly within the garment industry because the governments and corporation owners only care about the profit of the clothing itself and do not respect the human rights of the workers (Matsuura & Teng, 2020).

### **Environmental Consequences of Fast Fashion**

The global garment industry is a rapidly evolving industry, yet the reality for women to have a safe or equal work environment has not occurred. The countries that contain garment factories are directly harmed by climate change disasters. The garment industry actively contributes to climate change, and it is responsible for 10% of annual global carbon emissions. The World Bank (2019) estimates the fashion industry's greenhouse gas emissions will reach 50% by 2030. The introduction of fast fashion has created even more climate concerns because of the mass consumption and fast turn-around rates. The garments being cheap makes them disposable within a few wears, persuading the consumer to purchase more frequently (Corradini, 2018). The resources that are needed to produce clothing, such as cotton, require gallons of water to grow and maintain. Globally, garment factories require tons of water to operate and produce clothing. Fast fashion requires the use of toxic dyes and chemicals to produce clothes quickly. Taking from local watersheds can lead to drought and dehydration. The excess water is then dumped back into the local watershed contaminating the water with chemicals from the factory. Most ready-made garments are now made with synthetic fabrics like

polyester or spandex. Although marketed as synthetic fabrics, companies do not frequently mention these fabrics are produced with oil and chemicals. Cotton takes a lot of water to produce, but synthetic fabrics bring harm to local water sheds that become contaminated with chemicals within the dyeing processes (Scott, 2020).

With the rise of technology in the twenty-first century and the continued production of ready-made garments, the typical consumer from the global North consumes more now than ever and production rates have doubled in the last fifteen years (Bick et al., 2018). People living in the Global North consume at an enormous rate which contributes to unpaid and unlivable treatment endured by women garment workers. Fast fashion has dominated malls and department stores alike, but current technology created a way to shop for new clothes on the go or at home. Globalization and online shopping mutually benefit each other as brands can be fully online and have a global demand. Increasing demand for clothing from the high consumption levels in high income countries contributes to the high levels of global emissions the apparel industry produces yearly. The globalization of social media platforms has contributed to fast fashion online brands succeeding without in person stores and has created a new generation of consumers (Zhenxiang & Lijie, 2011). There are some fast fashion brands that label items as sustainably sourced, but this is often “green washing” – when the company uses the appeal of bettering the environment without actually producing the clothing ethically.

Climate change is adding another harmful atmosphere garment workers must endure as the women are exposed to harsh chemicals and increasing heat levels from climate change. Increasing heat levels are harmful for the women’s health as the factories do not contain proper ventilation or cooling spaces (Anderson Hoffner et al., 2021). Heat stress is prevalent within garment factories with the lack of windows or central air conditioning. They are forced to work long hours with no breaks, in the unbearable heat and consistently breathing in chemicals or dust from cotton production. The inhalation of chemicals degrades the woman’s lungs and respiratory systems. Studies have shown that women working in garment factories have the presence of chemical particles in their lungs (Mahmood et al., 2017). Micro plastics from the production of clothes can also harm women as plastics can now be found within the human body. The chemicals and dyes may not cause immediate harm, but they introduce long-term risk of disease from working in a garment factory (Regan, 2020).

Along with tropical storms and heat waves affecting women’s ability to work, UN data from past climate disasters shows that more women than men faced violence after these disasters (Anderson Hoffner et al., 2021). During climate change crises the preexisting gender-based violence increases because of women’s vulnerable positions. Women who live in poverty, such as garment workers, tend to



their land, yet the land is slowly disappearing. Climate change has made it difficult for women to provide for their families, therefore putting more pressure on young girls to find jobs to help their family (UN Women, 2022). Garment industries thrive off the vulnerability and recruit young girls in the factory to work. However, in the coming years climate crises will only continue to worsen and the women and girls working in the garment factories will face long-standing gender-based violence in more heightened situations (Anderson Hoffner et al., 2021). More women and girls will die in factories as they are to work in hot climates with no breaks and other climate disasters become more frequent. Forced migration is an outcome of climate change and women are harmed during migration because of the susceptibility of sexual assault during the migration or even when they arrive at refugee camps (UN Women, 2022).

### **COVID 19 Current Implications**

The Asia-Pacific region has consistently remained the sector for garment work, but current events such as the COVID-19 pandemic caused factories to experience mass shutdowns. Seventy percent of global apparel factories exist in the Asia-Pacific region and employ millions of workers within the garment industry (Jackson et al., 2021). In late fall and winter of 2019, before the worldwide COVID-19 lockdown occurred in March of 2020, garment factories in the Asia-Pacific region experienced millions of cancellations because first cases of COVID-19 occurred in Asia-Pacific countries (Teodoro & Rodriguez, 2020). The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic were felt among women garment workers and continue to persist. Many factories shut down their production because the demand for clothing had decreased and governmental lockdown prevented work. However, the garment factories closing left women workers without a job and forced to stay at home (Jackson et al., 2020). Garment factories are positioned in countries where women rights are not respected, and domestic violence persists. Women were forced home to live in places that are volatile for their well-being. Staying at home full-time means the pressure of not making any money and not being able to support their family will mentally weigh on the garment workers. Additionally, intimate partner violence is one of the main forms of sexual violence that women globally face in their lifetime. Being at home more often leaves women in vulnerable positions and at risk everyday of facing sexual violence or harassment in her home (Asia Floor Wage Alliance, 2021).

Furthermore, with the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic, women in the garment industry face unemployment, and there are no social services in place for them to have access to benefits. Most of the factories do not have built into regulations to aid workers in situations of pregnancy or unemployment. Women garment workers lost one of the main sources of income for their family, and

the International Labor Organization estimates women will have more challenges than men in regaining their jobs once the pandemic slows down (International Labor Organization, 2021). Women being unemployed pushes a burden of unpaid care work to be thrust upon them. Furthermore, less women in the labor sector means there will be less women represented in law making (Malik & Naeem, 2020). Although working in garment factories can be grueling, tiring, and a violation of their rights to work, being unemployed creates challenges for women's rights to work as well. Without women being in the working sector there will be less unionization and joining together of women workers. Women need to be employed in working roles but in a way that respects their rights and enforces fundamental labor standards (Kelly, 2021).

### **Case Study: Bangladesh**

Bangladesh is located within the Asia Pacific region and has significant religious and cultural ways of living that alter how women participate in spaces of work. The cultural concept of "purdah" is deeply embedded within the constructions of everyday life in Bangladesh. Although purdah can also be a garment women wear in public, in Bangladesh purdah represents more of a systematic and structural way of women being veiled from public spaces (Kibira, 1995; Rock, 2001). Purdah is the concept of women and men being separate entities, but men are allowed in the outside spaces and women are confined to inside of the home (Kibira, 1995; Rock, 2001). Under purdah traditions women are not allowed to have a job and rely on their husband for everything. Rural traditional family values were dismantled in the 1970s with increasing population and correlating increasing poverty in Bangladesh (Kibira, 1995). Husbands left their wives to go work and women were stranded with no source of income. Rural poverty changed purdah values because poor families needed an extra source of income, so families adapted to sending their daughters off to work in manufacturing (Rock, 2001). Garment factories around the same time presented the opportunity of women being able to make money for themselves. However, the systemic roles of purdah persist within garment factories as the work is patriarchal and men are in positions of power of the women. Purdah practices within the garment factory also make it difficult for Bangladeshi women to unionize and advocate for themselves because purdah enforces subordination (Rock, 2001).

Four million people currently work in Bangladesh's garment industry, comprising of around 4,500 factories across the country. Eighty percent of the workers are women, but only five percent of women are in leadership positions (Matsuura & Teng 2020; Paton, 2021). According to the ILO, Bangladesh is the world's second largest exporter of garments behind China (Paton, 2021). Bangladesh's

current economy relies heavily on the ready-made garment (RMG) industry and has since the garment sector was established in the 1980s (Rock, 2001). Even though Bangladesh is one of the largest exporters of clothing, the Rana Plaza building crash in 2013 made the world aware of the precarious working conditions (Schoen, 2019). The Rana Plaza crash killed around 1,000 workers and left many others injured establishing it as one of the worst disasters in the garment industry. Furthermore, the crash followed a garment factory fire incident that happened months prior and killed around 100 Bangladeshi workers (Paton, 2021). After these incidents, the international community had their eyes on the Bangladeshi government and RMG factories (Schoen, 2019).

European fast fashion brands, such as H&M and Mango, have signed on to the Bangladesh Accord for Fire and Building Safety, thus committing to inspections of their companies' factories and to provide compensation for damages (Paton, 2021). The Bangladesh Accord for Fire and Building Safety was a legal binding document that promised repercussions if companies did not follow through with their commitments. There was also an American accord that brands from America signed with the same commitments. The American document was labeled Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety, and was a commitment, not a legal document (Schoen, 2019). Furthermore, the Alliance would not pay any reparations to help the factories cover any damages or areas that needed work (Schoen, 2019). However, both accords were dismantled in 2018, when a new council, the Ready-Made Garments Sustainability Council, took over (Cochran, 2021; Paton, 2021). Still, there is concern from unions on how well the Ready-Made Garments Sustainability Council will do holding fast fashion brands liable for self-inspections because self-inspections of factories were ineffective before the Rana Plaza crash (Paton, 2021). Following the Rana Plaza crash in Dhaka, garment factories were hit with strict laws enforcing safety. Garment factories that did want to pay to improve working conditions moved out of Dhaka and relocated in the rural countryside (Schoen, 2019).

Bangladesh has unique vulnerabilities when it comes to climate change and is susceptible to climate-based disasters. Bangladesh has lost over half a million people to climate-based disasters since 1970 (Mahmud et al., 2021). The country is made up of floodplains and coastal land, and 80% of Bangladesh is rural farmland. Garment factories tend to exist near areas of water that are prone to consistent flooding (Anderson Hoffner et al., 2020). Women garment workers in Bangladesh have already been feeling the effects of climate change. Bangladesh has experienced a rise in temperature of half a degree Celsius over the period of 1976 to 2019 (World Bank, 2021). Studies have shown the rising temperatures lead to health complications such as respiratory infections, and women working inside a garment factory are at higher of a risk because the heat is trapped within the building. There are no

proper ventilation systems within garment factories, and factory workers have to take days off because it is too hot to work. In Bangladesh by 2030, the ILO estimates almost five percent of potential working hours will be lost to heat (Anderson Hoffner et al., 2020). Cyclones, hurricanes, and typhoons wipe out crops and create insecurities for rural women working at garment factories in Bangladesh (World Bank, 2021).

### **Potential Solutions**

Adapting a more sustainable way of making clothing would help combat climate change, and sustainable practices would alleviate some challenges presented to women in garment work – but there are no easy solutions here. A recent UN climate report revealed that even if all emissions were stopped, the impacts of climate change are already being felt (UN Women, 2022). Women working in garment factories would not see much benefit from more sustainable ways of making clothes as factories would persist. If the factories were to shut down, it would leave the women unemployed with a potential family to look after. Although having a job was not much better as many garment workers are impoverished because women garment workers do not make enough to live in more adequate housing. Creating a more sustainable way to make clothing, including the materials, would produce more jobs. The UN has created a program, The Alliance to Sustainable Fashion, that focuses on sustainability, but there should be more of an emphasis on what would provide the best outcome for women garment workers (Meier, 2021). Climate change is already starting to effect countries and stopping emissions cannot undo the damages, so the next steps are crucial for women garment workers (Meier, 2021).

The addition of women in policy making would benefit the women garment workers. There needs to be a shift in the way the world views garment workers and women to create more gender-responsive laws. Women should be involved in the law and code creating processes as labor laws on gender discrimination effect women the most. Having women in legal positions allows for gender-based legal frameworks to be created and would benefit how women move through spaces (Anderson Hoffner et al., 2021). A large problem within the countries that host garment factories is the lack of women representation within governmental or public spaces. With more women involved in public spheres, the advocating for women's rights would increase with the spread of local organizations promoting women's rights. Advocating for women's rights could lead to more education among rural women, allowing for them to move up within social structures. Educating women would also decrease the amount of sexual violence within factories as high levels of violence come from disorganization and lack of knowledge. Women being able to read and write would greatly impact their quality of life within the

garment factory, as they would have the resources they need to advocate for their rights (Gazzola et al., 2020).

Additionally, the international community needs to create more legal binding documents within the garment industry that condemn the actions of the factories. Without legal binding documents, the practices the factories are supposed to follow are on a voluntary basis. Therefore, the factory can enforce a policy for a few weeks, but there are no official people enforcing the codes of practice put in place by the ILO or other international organizations. Mandatory reporting is crucial for keeping up with companies and making sure they are following ILO conventions, but there are possibilities of lying on the reports. Within certain governments there needs to be more laws responsive to the specific harassment and violence women face within the garment industry and women at work overall. Corporations should be held to human rights standards because corporations can impact one's enjoyment of human rights, sometimes even more than the government can. Creating more documents also would present women with more opportunities to unionize and sue companies based on legal binding documents rather than ILO conventions (Corradini, 2018).

Although corporations contribute the most to the continuation of fast fashion, consumers living in the global North should change their ways to prevent further harm of women garment workers. Middle to high income people in the global North contribute the most to consumption patterns of fast fashion. There needs to be more backlash for buying clothes from fast fashion brands; they need to become unpopular with global trendsetters. Celebrities with large followings on social media platforms need to stop promoting the precarious labor practices that exist within the garment factories. While brands that create more sustainable clothing can have more expensive prices, they will last longer than fast fashion clothing; therefore, one would be making an investment when buying a particular piece. The rapidly increasing global population will only add to consumption rates, so consumers need to be aware of the harm they are contributing to globally before they choose to buy clothing (Corradini, 2018).

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