**Assessment Task 4:**

Research Essay

**Topic:**

Sweatshop

**Question:**

There have been claims that sweatshop workers in developing/under-developed

countries are being exploited. What are the problems that sweatshop workers face?

How can these problems be addressed?

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<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1LmKEwemGvbvKt5cPLfmzVsaj4oMSMGH5>  
<https://www.grin.com/document/428839>

<https://www.triplepundit.com/2013/04/7-reasons-sweatshops-persist/>

**Introduction**

According to Merriam-webster.com (n.d.), a sweatshop is defined as “a shop or factory in which employees work for long hours at low wages and under unhealthy conditions” (para. 1). Any factory that violates at least 2 labour laws is considered a sweatshop (dosomething, n.d.). Sweatshop exploitation is a continuing problem within less economically developed countries and may occur in 2 situations. It can occur when underprivileged and underage workers are forced into cheap labour in an effort to survive and support their families or if working conditions and regulations are ignored and rebuked by employers (Turner & Kirchhof, 2018; South China Morning Post, 2003).

Sweatshop exploitation is an ongoing problem around the world especially in underdeveloped countries. Workers in sweatshop are forced to work under harsh environmental conditions while being exposed to work hazards which can severely impact their health. On the other hand, abuse and discrimination at work is so common that sweatshop workers tend to suffer from emotional issues such as low self-esteem, depression and suicide. As many unregulated sweatshops continue to ignore and neglect labour regulations, problems such as child labour which is a human right violation and a lack of worker welfare are still present.

This essay investigates the abuse and exploitation of sweatshop workers in less economically developed countries as well as the problems a sweatshop worker may face from work daily, while suggesting and evaluating the possible solution to these problems.

**Situation**

**The exploitation of sweatshop workers is a persisting issue in many underdeveloped countries. This problem is aggravated by the harsh working conditions and tragedies workers are facing in sweatshops and the exploitation of the underprivileged and underaged in poverty as labourers.**

Children are often exploited and forced into child labour in sweatshops in less economically developed countries due to financial and livelihood pressures. Poverty, a poor education system, high dropout rates along with poor parental support and a plunging economy are the key causes of child labour in underdeveloped countries. According to Turner & Kirchhof (2018), children as young as 5 years old are forced to leave their schools and home in order to work in low paying jobs in Congo. As many of these children living in third world countries are unable to afford their basic needs and do not have financial support from their parents, they have no choice but to forfeit their education and freedom in order to work as labourers to survive. Furthermore, Compassion International (n.d) further adds that children who have been working as child labourers since early childhood are more likely to be end up with underpaying jobs (Compassion International, n.d.). Sweatshop workers who have been working in labour for the majority of their lifetime tend to lack qualifications and certifications for work, thus there less are opportunities and alternative jobs available for them to get out of the poverty cycle. Therefore, children in underdeveloped countries may resort to child labour and end up working in sweatshops when facing any livelihood or financial crisis.

Academicians have also been caught plagiarising. Plagiarism is not a crime committed by only students. There are examples of plagiarism affecting high-up academia. A rather famous recent case was that of Dr Raj Persuad, a consultant psychiatrist who “admitted copying the work of other scholars for publication in his book and in articles that he submitted” (Malvern, 2008). In another case, Professor Judith M Okley, social anthropology in Hull, claimed her work had been plagiarised in Isabel Fonseca’s book *Bury Me Standing* (Armitstead, 2008). Due to her studies of anthropology Professor Okley spent months living with gypsies, events which were described in Fonseca’s book with no acknowledgement. Regrettably, situations like this occur fairly frequently in academia due to researchers carrying out similar studies to one another (ibid). Academicians who plagiarise will tarnish the image of the higher education.

Plagiarism affects every corner of academia. If this is not curtailed, this issue can be dangerous once students enter the working world.

**The workers in sweatshops are pressured with overwhelming production expectation thus they have to work under uncomfortable circumstances. Children are often the victims of child labour sweatshop exploitation which is an unethical practice and a violation of human rights as they should be in school instead of working.**

**Problem**

Workers in sweatshops are facing a great deal of stress arising from the overwhelming expectation of the employer which may be harmful to their mental and physical health.

Sweatshop workers tends to suffer from mental and physical strains due to the pressure of working overtime in order to meet the overwhelming output expectation at work. As a result, workers who are subjected to high stress and work trauma are more likely to develop suicidal tendencies and a low self esteem from negative emotions such as despair, depression and anger. Merchant (2017) reports that suicide is common in China as many depressed sweatshop workers tend to kill themselves by jumping off the factory buildings due to working conditions such as stress, long workdays and harassment from work in Foxconn, an Iphone factory in China. In response to the high suicide rates, barriers are deployed on walls to prevent workers from falling to death in factories in China (Merchant, 2017). If these sweatshops does not improve the working conditions, more workers will be mentally unhealthy and suffer from emotional stress. Moreover, sweatshop workers tend to suffer from sleep deprivation and mass faintings as they’re not given enough breaks (Mezzadri & McVeigh, 2017). Workers who are overworked and tired will become less productive and fall sick if they continue to work without rest and take a greater physical toll on their body. Hence, the mental and physical health of sweatshop workers are greatly affected by the working conditions and environment.

For students, plagiarism can impact badly on their academic progress. Some universities have a ‘zero tolerance’ policy in which people who commit plagiarism are asked to leave with immediate effect. The establishments that do not expel students will give them considerably lower grades than they were originally likely to achieve. Even the plagiarist who is not caught suffers through lack of skills and knowledge development which can only negatively affect them when they join the workforce, in effect under false pretences. In any case, the student has effectively wasted their time and money in attending university (Redman, 2006). Another difficulty that poses itself to students is plagiarism of their own work. If two essays throughout their course are very similar, it is easy to copy and paste chunks of one into the other. If the person marking the paper picks up on it, the punishment will probably not be too harsh but the paper will not be graded (Malvern, 2008). Plagiarism is considered the most serious crime in the academic world and students who commit plagiarism will be punished and their chances of graduating with excellence or even graduating at all may be jeopardised.

In conclusion, it is evident that plagiarism does not only affect the universities but also the students. The integrity of the students and their universities will be questioned if rampant plagiarism by the students go unchecked.

**Solution**

Many academics have come up with solutions to the plagiarism problem but it appears that the simple strategies such as teaching students how to write proper essay, how to avoid plagiarism and assessing them in a different manner are the best.

Formation of union and stronger enforcement of stricter rules and regulations to protect the workers in sweatshops will solve labour issues. Workers in unions are able to consult and negotiate with employers for their own benefits such as fair and reasonable wages (Morris, 2009). Namely in India, a recent labour reform provides benefits for the workers such as reduced working hours, maternity benefits and employee compensations (SHRM India Content Team, 2017). If a sweatshop union is formed and it is successful at negotiating for the worker’s benefits, workers will be able to enjoy advantages such as an increased minimum wage, reduced working hours. Consequently, this will help reduce occupational stress while maintaining productivity which may bring satisfaction to both the employees and the employers. Thus enforcing stricter labour laws will benefit and improve the working conditions of the workers.

Another solution would be in the way in which students are assessed. Instead of just setting essays, more exams, individual portfolios or presentations could be marked in order for the student to explore more around their subject and present their findings in a different way. As Carroll (2008) points out, “Students are unlikely to be able to buy ready-made coursework that integrates theory and practice, uses personal experiences or reflects on a case study you made up.” Instead of having straight essays in which it is easier to incorporate copied work, sole scholars have tried and tested new projects that mean a student has to produce everything that is one-hundred percent their own. A few have tried setting their students annotated booklists where the student records their findings and how it is relevant to the course and then they have a viva (interview) with the lecturer so their work can be assessed based on their handed in work and their answers in the viva. Others who still like set students’ essays ask them to submit photocopies of reliable sources that they have used (books etc). This way the marker can check the students paraphrasing and referencing throughout the project (Redman, 2008). Overall, the combating of plagiarism could change the way university assignments are assessed.

Systems like this may have to be brought in nationwide across all higher education institutions. It will eventually lessen the work for the staff as they will not have to thoroughly check every individual’s work and plagiarism councils will have to sit less often. It will also mean that student can get more involved in the research and writing process and eventually it may lead to higher scores at university and more knowledgeable graduates.

**Evaluation**

The problem of plagiarism will never completely disappear but there are several things that both universities and students can do.

The best and cheapest option for universities is to teach their students about plagiarism in their induction week and keep enforcing the information throughout the course. This means that the students are aware of the severity of committing plagiarism and the lecturers are all aware of university policy and what their students think about copying someone else’s work. Introduction of compulsory classes during induction week should also include lessons on paraphrasing, synthesis and citation. If these actions are taken, students will be more aware of the issues surrounding plagiarism. Students can also be introduced to technology that the institutions are using in checking plagiarism in students’ papers. This will lead to students becoming more aware and careful when using other people’s work and citing the sources. Creating a compulsory class for students on plagiarism and its effects and continue reminding them about it will help students get the best degree they can without relying on plagiarism and stop the university from gaining a bad reputation.

If learning institutions take proactive steps to counter plagiarism, plagiarism in the academic world can be reduced

**Conclusion**

Plagiarism is never going to go away but the points above show that there are things that universities can do to prevent it. By getting all the people at the institution (staff and students) on board with university policy about plagiarism then it will be easier for everyone involved to look out for it. Students can notice it when reading their own work and other students and lecturers can point it out when marking. By doing this everyone learns what plagiarism involves and how to prevent it. The various methods outlined all have their merits and all universities should adopt as many as possible. However, these have deliberately focussed on what can happen within the institutions. Perhaps the problem could also be approached in schools and colleges as students prepare for their university life. Plagiarism should be taught earlier on in education.

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