



For people my age, it's normal to have a minimal source of income but a large desire to shop. New clothes. New shoes. New stationary. New makeup. It's not exactly out of the ordinary. But what do you do when you're not willing to spend £13 on a new t-shirt, or £25 on a new dress? Lucky for us, there are a handful of websites that'll sell you the exact same item, for an eighth of the price. Nobody's really fussed about the quality, you get what you pay for, but now you can acquire stylish pieces without having to fret about how much it'll set you back. At face value, this seems like a blessing, but if you uncover the layers, you'll come to find that more people are suffering than benefiting. How is that possible?? Let me re-introduce you to a concept known as 'Child Labour'.

Thursday 12 June marks 'World Day Against Child Labour' and this years theme is 'Global Estimates and Trends'. It is a day to draw your attention to the significance child labour is having on global economies, and the number of children at risk of exploitation due to poor labour practices and regulations. Almost one tenth of children worldwide, that's 160 million, are engaged in unchecked child labour. That's 160 million who cannot go to school, play with friends or enjoy their childhood because they're busy packaging someone's Temu order. The greed of those who live comfortable lives is depriving these kids of life and joy - which should not be accepted under any circumstance. 160 million. Just think about that.

Protection from Harmful Work is the main focus of **Article 32** of the UNCRC. This article strictly prohibits child labour and protects children who have to work. It states that children should be protected from economic exploitation and any work that is likely to be hazardous, interfere with their education or harmful to their health and development. It underlines that governments must set minimum ages for young workers and ensure safe working conditions for them. The minimum age cannot be lower than the minimum school leaving age, ensuring sufficient education is always a priority. Parties are obligated to take legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to ensure the implementation of this article.

The mental, physical, emotional, financial and physiological effects of child labour are actually insane. Physical effects can range from minor respiratory issues to a loss of limbs and body parts. Weakened immune systems, stunted growth and physical defects are also common amongst workers. The working dynamics and environment, alongside other stressors, are bound to negatively impact a child's mental health and feelings. A child may begin to feel less

than, like they lack worth or importance. What's worse, is that those who voluntarily subject themselves to child labour, usually do it because they have no other choice. Child labour rates are especially high in developing countries, seeing as this is the only way for certain families to ascertain enough money to survive. Though, recent statistics show workers are being paid less and less, sometimes less than a third of what their product is worth.

It is our social responsibility to demand better. SHEIN, Temu and AliExpress are but a few examples of fast fashion brands that exploit their workers and diminish them to mere cogs in an economic machine. We cannot allow these grievances to continue and must make sure we are taking steps to becoming part of the solution and not the problem. I get it, inflation is on the rise, wages are going down and people are becoming more dependent on online shopping services. But we cannot fall short of our duty to these kids, who rely on us to set the standard, to ensure regulation doesn't contrast with morality and ethicality. So don't fall into the trap, don't become a part of the cycle. Governments have been doing their part to abolish poor labour practices since the 2000s, but now, we must do our part to protect these children from the irreversible effects of exploitation.

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