Analyzing the interactions between furthering decent work and social welfare sustainable development goals in fast fashion manufacturing in South Asia and East Asia

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Introduction

Background

Fast fashion has emerged as a low-cost, convenient, and fast-changing approach to apparel that has become a dominant choice for Millennial and Gen Z shoppers.

Workers face dangerous working conditions, long hours without breaks, poor pay, and violence in addition to the overwhelming majority living in poverty.

Women comprise 80% of garment workers and are exposed to discrimination, sexual violence, and unsanitary environments.
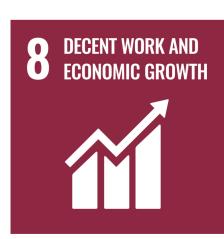
UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Launched in 2015 to be met by 2030, they are defined as *'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'*

The SDGs are not meant to be considered individually; rather the best way to achieve these goals would be to take on a holistic approach

1 NO POVERTY   5 GENDER EQUALITY   8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Research Objectives

The main objectives of this study are:
- Conduct a concise and thorough summary of the available information on the fast fashion industry's status towards the goals and targets of SDGs 1, 5, and 8.
- Score the interactions between targets of the focal goal of the study (SDG 8) and the selected goals (SDGs 1 and 5) using the scoring system proposed by Nilsson et al. (2016) and the criteria developed for this study.
- Assess the strength and nature of the positive or negative interactions between the goals using four considerations made by Nilsson et al. (2016).
- Assess the strength of supporting literature using McCollum's 2018 system.

Methodology

Literature Selection

Both scholarly and grey literature was used, including but not limited to the following types of grey sources:
- Scientific papers and scholarly articles
- Reports by institutions
- Blog postings
- Digital media outlets
- Newspaper articles

Target Exclusion

Certain targets within the SDGs selected were eliminated from consideration due to a lack of relevance and/or literary evidence of interactions between decent work, poverty, and gender equality

Scoring Framework

This study scored 7 possible types of interactions between the SDG targets, from the most positive (+3) meaning there is a strong interlinkage between the goals and one cannot be achieved without the fulfillment of the other, to the most negative (-3) meaning that the accomplishment of the goals are mutually exclusive.

Table 1: Nilsson's Scale for Scoring Targets and Assessing Goals

3	Indivisible	Inextricably linked to the achievement of another goal.
2	Reinforcing	Aids the achievement of another goal.
1	Enabling	Creates conditions that further another goal.
0	Consistent	No significant positive or negative interactions.
-1	Constraining	Limits options on another goal.
-2	Counteracting	Clashes with another goal.
-3	Cancelling	Makes it impossible to reach another goal.

Strength of Literary Evidence

The strength of literary evidence was assessed using McCollum's (2018) framework using the designations of low, medium, and strong for 0-3, 4-7, and 8 or more sources as evidence for each target.

Scoring Interpretation

-3	*Cancelling*
-2.5	*Counteracting - Cancelling*
-2	*Counteracting*
-1.5	*Constraining - Counteracting*
-1	*Constraining*
-0.5	*Consistent/Neutral - Constraining*
0	*Consistent/Neutral*
0.5	*Consistent/Neutral - Enabling*
1	*Enabling*
1.5	*Enabling - Reinforcing*
2	*Reinforcing*
2.5	*Reinforcing - Indivisible*
3	*Indivisible*

Articles with a score of zero were excluded from the sample size of the target

The average score of each target was taken and rounded off to one decimal place

Findings

Selected Target	Related SDG 8 Targets	Supporting Literature	Scoring Category & Interaction
TARGET 1-1 Eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than $1.25 a day (ERADICATE EXTREME POVERTY)	8.3 8.5 8.6 8.7 8.8	**AVERAGE SCORE: 1.9** **Sample = 30 * High literary evidence** Distribution of scores: Score +3: 9 Score +2: 12 Score +1: 8 Score -2: 1	**2.0: Reinforcing** Providing decent work and encouraging economic growth in the fast fashion manufacturing industry reinforces the eradication of extreme poverty.
TARGET 1-2 Reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions (REDUCE POVERTY BY AT LEAST 50%)	8.3 8.5 8.6 8.7 8.8	**AVERAGE SCORE: 2.7** **Sample = 30 * High literary evidence** Distribution of scores: Score +3: 20 Score +2: 10	**2.5: Reinforcing-Indivisible** Providing decent work and encouraging economic growth in the fast fashion industry is reinforcing/indivisible to the reduction of poverty.
TARGET 1-4 Ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, etc. (EQUAL RIGHTS TO OWNERSHIP BASIC SERVICES, TECHNOLOGY AND ECONOMIC RESOURCES)	8.2 8.3 8.4 8.5 8.6 8.7 8.8	**AVERAGE SCORE: 2.1** **Sample = 22 * High literary evidence** Distribution of scores: Score +3: 8 Score +2: 8 Score +1: 6	**2: Reinforcing** Providing decent work in fast fashion manufacturing reinforces the ability for the poor and vulnerable to have rights to economic resources and access to basic services, ownership, etc.
TARGET 1-5 Build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events & other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters (BUILD RESILIENCE TO ENVIRONMENTAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DISASTERS)	8.2 8.3 8.4 8.5 8.6 8.7 8.8	**AVERAGE SCORE: 2.5** **Sample = 24 * High literary evidence** Distribution of scores: Score +3: 13 Score +2: 9 Score +1: 2	**2.5: Reinforcing-Indivisible** Promoting decent work in fast fashion manufacturing is reinforcing-indivisible with building the resilience of the poor and reduce their vulnerability to extreme events and disasters.
TARGET 5-1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere (END DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS)	8.3 8.5 8.6 8.7 8.8 8.9	**AVERAGE SCORE: 2.4** **Sample = 24 * High literary evidence** Distribution of scores: Score +3: 14 Score +2: 6 Score +1: 4	**2.5: Reinforcing-Indivisible** Providing decent work in fast fashion manufacturing is reinforcing-indivisible with ending discrimination against women and girls.
TARGET 5-2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation (END ALL VIOLENCE AGAINST AND EXPLOITATION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS)	8.3 8.5 8.6 8.7 8.8 8.9	**AVERAGE SCORE: 2.6** **Sample = 24 * High literary evidence** Distribution of scores: Score +3: 17 Score +2: 5 Score +1: 2	**2.5: Reinforcing-Indivisible** Providing decent work and encouraging economic growth is reinforcing-indivisible with the elimination of violence against women and girls.
TARGET 5-5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life. (ENSURE FULL PARTICIPATION IN LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING)	8.3 8.5 8.8	**AVERAGE SCORE: 2.3** **Sample = 15 * High literary evidence** Distribution of scores: Score +3: 7 Score +2: 6 Score +1: 2	**2.5: Reinforcing-Indivisible** Promoting decent work in fast fashion manufacturing is reinforcing-indivisible with ensuring women's full participation and equal opportunities for leadership.

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