

FAST FASHION: WHO'S RESPONSIBLE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CRIMES AND CORPORATE GREED THROUGH GREEN CRIMINOLOGY

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Abstract: This study examines the environmental and ethical challenges of fast fashion through the lens of green criminology theory. Fast fashion's rapid production cycles, excessive resource consumption, and labor exploitation contribute to severe environmental degradation and social injustices. This research highlights key concerns, including pollution from synthetic fabrics, overproduction leading to excessive textile waste, and exploitative labor conditions in developing nations. By comparing fast and slow fashion models, the study identifies sustainable alternatives that emphasize ethical labor practices, eco-friendly materials, and mindful consumption. Applying green criminology frameworks environmental, species, and ecological justice, this paper critiques corporate irresponsibility and explores legal accountability for industrial pollution, deforestation, and carbon emissions. Findings reveal that corporate sustainability initiatives remain insufficient, with greenwashing prevalent among major fashion brands. The study argues for stronger regulatory policies, corporate responsibility measures, and consumer awareness to drive systemic change. By integrating criminology, environmental law, and ethical fashion perspectives, this research contributes to discussions on sustainability and corporate accountability in the global fashion industry.

Keywords: Corporate Accountability; Environmental Justice; Fast Fashion; Green Criminology; Textile Waste

INTRODUCTION

The modern fashion industry is driven by the rapid evolution of trends, leading to the emergence of fast fashion from slow fashion, a business model designed to shorten the time between production and retail availability.¹ Fast fashion brands capitalize on consumer demand by frequently updating product lines and producing apparel in high volumes within short time frames.² This model has democratized fashion by making trendy clothing more affordable, but it has also significantly altered consumer behaviour.³

The perception of clothing has shifted from a long-term investment to disposable commodities, diminishing the prestige-based hierarchy that traditionally defined fashion. However, the economic success of fast fashion has come at a steep environmental and ethical cost, warranting critical examination.

Fast fashion is characterized by rapid production and distribution processes, ensuring that new products reach the market as quickly as possible.⁴ This approach,

¹ Piera Centobelli and others, 'Slowing the Fast Fashion Industry: An All-Round Perspective' (2022) 38 Current Opinion in Green and Sustainable Chemistry 100684.

² Piotr Zaborek and Dominika Nowakowska, 'Can Corporate Social Responsibility Shift Consumer Behavior? Insights from Scenario-Based Experiment

in the Fast Fashion Industry,' *Administrative Sciences* 14, no. 11 (2024).

³ *ibid.*

⁴ Luana Gomes de Oliveira, Felipe G Miranda and Maria Amélia de Paula Dias, 'Sustainable Practices in Slow and Fast Fashion Stores: What Does the Customer Perceive?' (2022) 6 Cleaner Engineering and Technology 100413.

commonly associated with brands such as Shein, Zara, H&M, Fashion Nova, Forever 21, Uniqlo, and etc extends beyond the fashion sector to industries such as consumer electronics, where frequent model updates align with evolving market trends.⁵

Scholars have identified key components of fast fashion systems, including quick response strategies, frequent product assortment updates, short product lifecycles, and trend-driven design.⁶ These features have enabled companies to capitalize on shifting consumer preferences, yet they have also raised concerns regarding sustainability, waste, and labour exploitation.⁷

Despite its economic advantages, fast fashion is increasingly scrutinized for its environmental and ethical ramifications.⁸ According to fast fashion statistics for 2025, the industry has a significant environmental footprint, accounting for 10% of global annual carbon emissions exceeding the combined output of international flights and maritime shipping. In addition to its carbon impact, the sector is a major consumer of natural resources, using 141 billion cubic meters of water each year. It is also a key contributor to ocean pollution, responsible for 35% of microplastic contamination.⁹ The industry's rapid production cycle fosters excessive consumption, with consumers

purchasing numerous garments yearly and discarding them after only a few uses. This practice contributes to an unprecedented rise in textile waste, with vast amounts ending up in landfills and exacerbating ecological degradation.¹⁰ The environmental cost of fast fashion is substantial, as the industry ranks among the largest consumers of water resources and contributes significantly to pollution through toxic dyes and synthetic materials¹¹. Greenhouse gas emissions from textile production further exacerbate climate change, positioning fast fashion as a major contributor to environmental degradation.¹²

Green criminology offers a compelling framework for analysing the environmental crimes associated with fast fashion.¹³ This field of study critiques industries that exploit environmental resources for profit while evading accountability.¹⁴ By examining corporate practices through the lens of green criminology, it becomes evident that the fashion industry's profit-driven model fuels ecological destruction and social injustices linked to environmental harm. Many fast fashion companies outsource production to developing nations with weaker environmental regulations, cutting costs while externalizing environmental damage. This creates a transnational web of corporate irresponsibility, where legal loopholes are

⁵ Yunjeong Kim and Kyung W Oh, 'Which Consumer Associations Can Build a Sustainable Fashion Brand Image? Evidence from Fast Fashion Brands' (2020) 12 Sustainability.

⁶ Gérard Cachon and Robert Swinney, 'The Value of Fast Fashion: Quick Response, Enhanced Design, and Strategic Consumer Behavior' (2011) 57 Management Science 778.

⁷ Nancy MP Bocken and Samuel W Short, 'Unsustainable Business Models – Recognising and Resolving Institutionalised Social and Environmental Harm' (2021) 312 Journal of Cleaner Production 127828.

⁸ Poppy Imogen Herold and Daniel Prokop, 'Is Fast Fashion Finally out of Season? Rental Clothing Schemes as a Sustainable and Affordable Alternative to Fast Fashion' (2023) 146 Geoforum 103873.

⁹ Statistic, 'Environmental Impact of Fast Fashion Statistic 2025' (United States, 3 February 2025)

<<https://www.uniformmarket.com/statistics/fast-fashion-statistics>>.

¹⁰ Rachel Bick, Erika Halsey and Christine C Ekenga, 'The Global Environmental Injustice of Fast Fashion' (2018) 17 Environmental Health 92.

¹¹ Kerrice Bailey, Aman Basu and Sapna Sharma, 'The Environmental Impacts of Fast Fashion on Water Quality: A Systematic Review' (2022) 14 Water.

¹² Saloua Biyada and Jaunius Urbonavičius, 'Circularity in Textile Waste: Challenges and Pathways to Sustainability' (2025) 24 Cleaner Engineering and Technology 100905.

¹³ Katja Eman and others, 'Environmental Crime and Green Criminology in South Eastern Europe—Practice and Research' (2013) 59 Crime, Law and Social Change.

¹⁴ Haitao Yu, Tima Bansal and Diane-Laure Arjaliès, 'International Business Is Contributing to Environmental Crises' (2022) Forthcoming Journal of International Business Studies.

exploited to maintain high profit margins at the expense of ecological sustainability.

Beyond environmental harm, fast fashion perpetuates significant social injustices. The industry often relies on exploitative labour conditions, particularly in low-wage garment factories where workers endure unsafe conditions, meagre wages, and excessive working hours.¹⁵ Numerous studies have highlighted the intersection between environmental harm and human rights violations in the fashion supply chain. These injustices reinforce systemic inequalities, making corporate accountability a critical issue within environmental and social justice discourses.

Cultural influences also play a role in sustaining the fast fashion model. Aggressive marketing campaigns, social media trends, and influencer endorsements drive overconsumption. Fast fashion brands create an artificial sense of urgency through seasonal sales and limited-time collections, encouraging impulsive purchasing behaviours that further exacerbate waste accumulation.¹⁶ This consumer culture aligns with broader discussions in green criminology about how corporate marketing strategies contribute to environmental harm.

In response to these challenges, environmental justice movements have emerged to challenge corporate practices within the fashion industry. Activists, policymakers, and scholars advocate for stronger regulations to curb pollution, enforce fair labour practices, and promote sustainable alternatives such as slow fashion and circular economy models. These approaches emphasize ethical sourcing, recycling, and extended product lifespans as viable solutions to mitigate the industry's negative impact. Slow fashion, in contrast to fast fashion,

prioritizes quality over quantity, encourages mindful consumption, and promotes the use of sustainable materials and ethical labour practices. This movement challenges the throwaway culture perpetuated by fast fashion by advocating for timeless designs and durable clothing that reduce waste and environmental degradation.

Moreover, increasing consumer awareness and behavioural change are crucial to fostering a more sustainable fashion industry. Educating the public about the hidden costs of fast fashion can drive demand for ethical and sustainable choices. Governments and regulatory bodies play a key role in enforcing corporate responsibility through policies that mandate sustainable production practices and transparency in supply chains.

This paper critically examines the intersection of fast fashion and green criminology, shedding light on corporate accountability and proposing sustainable solutions to mitigate environmental crimes. By exploring corporate environmental harm through the framework of green criminology, this study contributes to the growing discourse on environmental justice and corporate ethics in the global fashion industry. The analysis draws upon recent scholarly literature to illustrate how existing research has responded to these issues and how this study builds upon these perspectives. The research methodology involves a normative legal method with qualitative analysis of corporate sustainability reports, environmental impact assessments, and scholarly critiques of fast fashion's business model. By integrating interdisciplinary perspectives from incorporating law, criminology, and its intersection with victimology this study aims

¹⁵ Jyoti Singh and Shefali Bansal, 'The Impact of the Fashion Industry on the Climate and Ecology' (2024) 21 World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews 210.

¹⁶ Citragama Prameswari, 'The Influence of Social Media Marketing Towards Fast Fashion Brands' (2022) 11 Jurnal Entrepreneur dan Entrepreneurship 125.

to provide a comprehensive understanding of the environmental and ethical consequences of fast fashion while advocating for systemic change.

Through this exploration, the study underscores the need for greater corporate accountability, policy interventions, and consumer awareness to foster a more ethical and sustainable fashion industry. The findings contribute to academic discussions on green criminology and environmental justice, reinforcing the urgency of systemic reforms within the global fashion supply chain. By highlighting the intricate relationship between corporate greed, environmental harm, and social injustice, this paper aims to influence future research, policymaking, and consumer behaviour towards more responsible fashion consumption.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative, interdisciplinary approach using a normative legal method to analyze the environmental and ethical implications of fast fashion through the lens of green criminology. Data is gathered from primary sources, such as corporate sustainability reports and environmental impact assessments, alongside secondary sources, including scholarly articles and books. The study integrates legal, criminological, and victimological perspectives to evaluate corporate responsibility, focusing on the environmental crimes and labor exploitation associated with fast fashion. Comparative analysis with the slow fashion model, which emphasizes sustainability and ethical practices, further informs the investigation. By examining the

role of greenwashing and assessing the regulatory gaps in corporate practices, this study aims to provide recommendations for stronger policies, improved corporate accountability, and increased consumer awareness to promote a more sustainable fashion industry.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

A. Slow Fashion Vis a Vis Fast Fashion

The garment industry stands out as one of the world's largest and most interconnected sectors, playing a critical role in the global economy.¹⁷ Its global nature stems from the fact that many countries contribute to clothing production, not just for their own markets but for the broader international textile and apparel industry.¹⁸ This industry has also played a crucial role in national economic development, as many nations have relied on clothing exports as a key driver of industrialization due to its low initial investment and labour-intensive nature.¹⁹

However, in recent years, the fashion industry has faced growing criticism for its environmental and social consequences, particularly regarding the exploitative and wasteful practices of fast fashion. The fast fashion model prioritizes rapid production cycles, low-cost manufacturing, and disposable consumer habits, leading to significant environmental degradation and ethical concerns.²⁰ In response, slow fashion has emerged as a sustainable alternative that emphasizes ethical labour practices, environmental responsibility, and long-lasting garment quality.²¹

Fast fashion has been widely criticized for its disregard for both environmental

¹⁷ Patrizia Gazzola and others, 'Trends in the Fashion Industry. The Perception of Sustainability and Circular Economy: A Gender/Generation Quantitative Approach' (2020) 12 Sustainability 2809.

¹⁸ Md Tareque Rahaman and others, 'Green Production and Consumption of Textiles and Apparel: Importance, Fabrication, Challenges and Future Prospects' (2024) 10 Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity 100280.

¹⁹ Jai S Mah, 'Industrial-Led Economic Development of Cambodia' (2022) 39 Journal of Southeast Asian Economies 198.

²⁰ Taylor Brydges, 'Closing the Loop on Take, Make, Waste: Investigating Circular Economy Practices in the Swedish Fashion Industry' (2021) 293 Journal of Cleaner Production 126245.

²¹ Sojin Jung and Byoungcho Jin, 'A Theoretical Investigation of Slow Fashion: Sustainable Future of the Apparel Industry' (2014) 38 International Journal of Consumer Studies.

sustainability and worker welfare. The industry's business model is built on the rapid production of inexpensive, trend-driven clothing, designed to be worn only a few times before being discarded.²² This high turnover results in massive textile waste, with millions of tons of clothing ending up in landfills each year. Additionally, fast fashion relies heavily on synthetic fabrics, which contribute to plastic pollution and microplastic contamination in oceans.

Beyond its environmental damage, fast fashion is notorious for its exploitative labour practices. Many of the world's fast fashion brands manufacture their products in countries with weak labour protections, where garment workers primarily women are subjected to poor working conditions, low wages, and long hours.²³ Numerous reports have exposed cases of child labour, forced labour, and unsafe factory conditions, with tragedies such as the 2013 killing more than 1.100 workers of Rana Plaza collapse in Bangladesh highlighting the deadly consequences of unchecked exploitation.²⁴ Despite mounting criticism, many fast fashion retailers continue to prioritize cost-cutting over ethical sourcing, perpetuating these harmful labour practices.

In response to growing consumer awareness, some fast fashion brands have

attempted to incorporate sustainability initiatives.²⁵ Companies like H&M and Zara have introduced limited eco-friendly product lines and recycling programs, seeking to improve their public image.²⁶ Zara, for example, has implemented near-sourcing strategies by manufacturing some of its trendiest products in countries close to its headquarters in Spain. Although labour costs in Europe are higher than in many Asian apparel hubs, Zara owns domestic production facilities and outsources to nearby countries such as Morocco, Portugal, and Turkey.²⁷ This approach allows for quicker adaptation to trends while offering greater supply chain control. Additionally, near-sourcing aligns with slow fashion principles by reducing transportation-related emissions.

Zara has also introduced small-scale sustainability measures, such as offering organic cotton products and committing to eliminating hazardous chemical discharges from production.²⁸ Similarly, H&M has pledged to increase its use of recycled materials and improve factory conditions.²⁹ However, despite these initiatives, these brands have not fundamentally changed their fast fashion business models. The continued reliance on low-cost, high-volume production undermines any sustainability efforts, as the

²² Emma Williams, 'Appalling or Advantageous? Exploring the Impacts of Fast Fashion From Environmental, Social, and Economic Perspectives' (2022) 13 *Journal for Global Business and Community* <<https://jgbc.scholasticahq.com/article/36873-appalling-or-advantageous-exploring-the-impacts-of-fast-fashion-from-environmental-social-and-economic-perspectives>> accessed 9 February 2025.

²³ Yordan Gunawan, Anandiva Matahariza and Wiwit Putri, 'The Dark Side Of Fast Fashion: Examining The Exploitation Of Garment Workers In Bangladesh' (2023) 12 *Jurnal Hukum dan Peradilan* 441.

²⁴ School of Business McCombs, 'Collapse at Rana Plaza' *Ethics Unwrapped* (Texas, 2022) <<https://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/video/collapse-at-rana-plaza>>.

²⁵ Hannah Neumann, Luisa Martinez and Luis Martinez, 'Sustainability Efforts in the Fast Fashion

Industry: Consumer Perception, Trust and Purchase Intention' (2021) 12 *Sustainability Accounting, Management and Policy Journal* 571.

²⁶ *Loc. cit.*, Gazzola and others (n 17).

²⁷ Nebahat Tokatli, 'Global Sourcing: Insights from the Global Clothing Industry—the Case of Zara, a Fast Fashion Retailer' (2008) 8 *Journal of Economic Geography* 21.

²⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹ Georgia Wright, 'How H&M Is Facing Sustainability Head on – despite Greenwashing Pushback' (*Retail Gazette*, 19 December 2024) <<https://www.retailgazette.co.uk/blog/2024/12/hm-sustainability/#:~:text=As%20the%20retailer%20continues%20to,sustainability%20at%20a%20fast%20fashion>>.

core issue of overconsumption remains unaddressed.

The concept of slow fashion first gained attention in 2007 when it was introduced in media discourse.³⁰ Since then, scholars have sought to define it and distinguish it from related concepts such as sustainability and ethical production. Early discussions likened slow fashion to the slow food movement, describing it as a “farmer’s market approach” to clothing. Unlike fast fashion, which prioritizes rapid trend cycles and mass production, slow fashion focuses on timeless designs, neutral colours, and garments crafted by skilled artisans who receive fair wages.³¹ Some scholars even characterize slow fashion as the direct opposite of fast fashion.

The slow fashion movement promotes environmentally responsible and socially ethical practices, such as using organic materials, recycling, repairing clothing, and purchasing second hand items.³² It seeks to counter the disposable nature of fast fashion by encouraging consumers to invest in high-quality, long-lasting apparel. While reusing clothing was once seen as unfashionable, public figures such as First Lady Michelle Obama and the Queen of England have helped normalize the practice by re-wearing and restyling outfits.

Despite its benefits, slow fashion has struggled to compete with fast fashion’s appeal to trend-driven consumers. Many associate sustainable fashion with outdated styles, assuming that ethical clothing lacks the trendiness of fast fashion.³³ Additionally, because slow fashion emphasizes craftsmanship and quality materials, it is often perceived as expensive. Some scholars

argue that slow fashion overlaps with luxury fashion, as both emphasize high-quality, artisan-made garments. However, associating sustainability with luxury can create barriers to accessibility, making ethical fashion appear exclusive to wealthier consumers.

One of the greatest challenges to the widespread adoption of slow fashion is consumer awareness. Many shoppers remain uninformed about the ethical and environmental costs of their clothing choices.³⁴ Although consumers increasingly demand transparency in supply chains, retailers often provide limited or misleading information about their sustainability efforts.³⁵ Greenwashing where brands exaggerate or fabricate sustainability claims has further contributed to consumer scepticism. Younger consumers, in particular, tend to question corporate claims, as they are accustomed to verifying information independently. Greater transparency is needed to educate the public and encourage more ethical consumption habits.

This contrast between slow fashion and fast fashion underscores the broader debate on sustainability in the fashion industry. While slow fashion promotes ethical labour practices, environmental responsibility, and durable clothing, fast fashion thrives on rapid production, low costs, and high turnover. To better illustrate these fundamental differences, Table 1 provides a comparative overview of the key aspects distinguishing slow fashion from fast fashion.

The contrast between slow fashion and fast fashion highlights the urgent need for

³⁰ Musukami Clara, ‘How Do Slow Fashion Brands Manage to Guarantee Good Working Conditions?: The Case of Shoe Manufacturing in Remote Countries’ (2023) 1 *Liege Universite* 1.

³¹ Mariam Yusuff, ‘Slow Fashion vs. Fast Fashion: Implications for Sustainability’.

³² Paulo Pires and others, ‘Sustainable Fashion: Conceptualization, Purchase Determinants, and Willingness to Pay More’ (2024) 14 *Administrative Sciences* 143.

³³ Lisa McNeill and Rebecca Moore, ‘Sustainable Fashion Consumption and the Fast Fashion

Conundrum: Fashionable Consumers and Attitudes to Sustainability in Clothing Choice’ (2015) 39 *International Journal of Consumer Studies*.

³⁴ Sasha N Sarokin and NMP Bocken, ‘Pursuing Profitability in Slow Fashion: Exploring Brands’ Profit Contributors’ (2024) 444 *Journal of Cleaner Production* 141237.

³⁵ Diane Mollenkopf, Simone Peinkofer and Yu Chu, ‘Supply Chain Transparency: Consumer Reactions to Incongruent Signals’ (2022) 68 *Journal of Operations Management*.

systemic change in the fashion industry. While slow fashion promotes sustainability, ethical labour practices, and mindful consumption, fast fashion continues to drive environmental degradation and worker exploitation. To create a truly ethical and environmentally responsible fashion industry, consumers must demand greater transparency, reject disposable clothing culture, and support brands that prioritize quality, fairness, and sustainability over profit and rapid production.

B. Green Criminology Theory and Its Application to Fast Fashion

Green criminology is a subfield of criminology that focuses on environmental harm, ecological justice, and the intersection between human activities and their impact on the environment.³⁶ It goes beyond traditional criminology, which primarily studies crimes defined by legal systems, by examining actions that harm ecosystems, wildlife, and communities, even if those actions are not classified as illegal.³⁷

According to South green criminology is concerned with analysing environmental crimes, ecological harm, and justice issues affecting both nature and non-human species.³⁸ This field is constantly evolving to reflect changes in both social and natural environments over time. Rather than focusing solely on legal violations, green criminology also examines socially, institutionally, and individually accepted behaviours, actions, and practices that may contribute to environmental damage. At its core, green

criminology explores environmental degradation, legal frameworks, and regulatory policies aimed at safeguarding ecosystems and specific species from the harmful effects of industrial processes. In green criminology, three justice-based approaches are identified: environmental justice, species justice, and ecological justice.³⁹ Each of these approaches carries distinct emphases and objectives, addressing different dimensions of harm and justice. Here is an explanation of each approach:

Environmental Justice

David Schlosberg's concept of environmental justice provides a theoretical foundation that aligns closely with the principles of green criminology, especially when applied to issues such as fast fashion. Green criminology examines environmental harm caused by human activities, often critiquing industries like fast fashion for their role in environmental degradation and social injustices. Schlosberg's multidimensional framework focusing on distribution, recognition, capabilities, and participatory democracy offers critical insights into understanding and addressing the environmental and social crimes perpetuated by fast fashion.⁴⁰

First distribution, in the context of fast fashion, distribution justice highlights the unequal burden of environmental harm. The industry disproportionately impacts poor and marginalized communities through pollution, waste mismanagement, and exploitation of natural resources. For example, textile dyeing pollutes water systems in developing

³⁶ Ekaterina Gladkova, Alison Hutchinson and Tanya Wyatt, 'Green Criminology in International Perspectives' <<https://oxfordre.com/criminology/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264079.001.0001/acrefore-9780190264079-e-665>>.

³⁷ Rachel Boratto and Carole Gibbs, 'Wildlife Crime' <<https://oxfordre.com/criminology/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264079.001.0001/acrefore-9780190264079-e-376>>.

³⁸ Angus Nurse, 'Green Criminology: Shining a Critical Lens on Environmental Harm' (2017) 3 Palgrave Communications 10.

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ D Schlosberg, *Defining Environmental Justice: Theories, Movements, and Nature* (Oxford University Press 2009) <<https://books.google.co.id/books?id=SBkUDAAQBAJ>>.

countries, depriving local populations of clean water a clear violation of fair distribution of environmental goods.

Second recognition, Schlosberg's emphasis on recognition resonates with green criminology's call to acknowledge the rights of both human and nonhuman victims of environmental harm. Fast fashion often disregards the dignity and rights of workers in low-income countries and fails to recognize the intrinsic value of ecological systems destroyed by industrial activities like deforestation and habitat destruction.

Third capabilities, Fast fashion undermines the capabilities of individuals, communities, and ecosystems. For instance, industrial pollution and excessive resource extraction impair the health, livelihood, and resilience of both people and the environment. Schlosberg's concept urges accountability for fostering the conditions that allow all entities human and nonhuman to function and flourish.\

Forth, participatory democracy while Schlosberg's call for inclusive decision-making processes aligns with green criminology's advocacy for participatory governance in addressing environmental harm. Communities affected by fast fashion's environmental and social crimes are often excluded from policy discussions, highlighting the need for greater inclusivity in tackling these issues.

Species Justice

Species Justice involves recognizing the intrinsic value and rights of non-human species to exist and thrive, advocating for their protection from exploitation and harm caused by human activities. This aligns with fast fashion's impact on biodiversity, where the exploitation of natural resources and industrial practices threaten various species' survival.

Ecological Justice

Ecological justice refers to the broader notion of ensuring the integrity and sustainability of ecosystems as a whole.

Schlosberg argues for the recognition of ecosystems as entities that require protection from environmental degradation caused by unsustainable industrial practices, such as deforestation, pollution, and waste. This concept is vital in the context of fast fashion, as the industry's practices often disrupt ecosystems, leading to long-term ecological harm. Based on the framework, author will focus on the environmental justice aspect of green criminology to analyse the core issues of fast fashion, through its justice-based approaches environmental justice, species justice, and ecological justice this field highlights the interconnected nature of environmental degradation and social inequality. David Schlosberg's multidimensional framework on justice further enriches this perspective by advocating for fair distribution of environmental goods, recognition of affected entities, enhancement of capabilities, and inclusive decision-making. These principles underscore the need for systemic changes in the fast fashion industry, including greater corporate accountability and sustainable practices, to prevent harm to humans, non-human species, and ecosystems.

All in all, the application of green criminology to fast fashion reveals the urgent necessity of transitioning toward ethical and sustainable alternatives that prioritize ecological balance, species protection, and social equity. This approach not only addresses the current challenges posed by fast fashion but also offers a pathway toward a more just and environmentally conscious future.

C. Environmental and Worker Cases Related

The fast fashion industry has come under intense scrutiny due to its detrimental effects on both the environment and worker welfare. Its business model, characterized by mass production, rapid trend cycles, and low prices, contributes to a range of critical issues demanding thorough consideration. A particularly crucial concern lies in sustainable

production practices and the consequential environmental pollution.

Continuous production and environmental pollution

The fast fashion business model is characterized by exceptionally rapid production cycles and substantial volumes. Fast fashion brands consistently refresh their product lines to stay aligned with evolving trends and cater to significant consumer demand. Consequently, clothing production occurs on a continuous basis, involving the intensive utilization of natural resources, including water, energy, and raw materials such as cotton and synthetic fibers⁴¹.

One of the most significant environmental repercussions of mass production is water contamination. The textile industry is a major global contributor to water pollution. Textile dyeing and processing generate liquid waste containing a range of hazardous chemicals, including heavy metals and synthetic dyes⁴². This waste is frequently discharged directly into rivers and other water bodies without adequate treatment, leading to the pollution of aquatic ecosystems and posing a risk to the health of human populations reliant on these water sources.

In addition to water pollution, the fast fashion industry significantly contributes to air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. The substantial energy consumption associated with clothing production processes, transportation, and distribution results in the emission of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other greenhouse gases, thereby accelerating climate change⁴³. Cotton production exerts a substantial environmental impact. The application of fertilizers and

pesticides in cotton farming contaminates soil and water resources, concurrently exerting detrimental effects on biodiversity. Furthermore, the cotton production process is water-intensive, potentially leading to water scarcity in arid regions.

Research findings indicate that fast fashion not only accelerates apparel production and consumption but also exacerbates textile waste generation. Garments manufactured by fast fashion brands are frequently characterized by inferior quality and designed for disposal after limited use. The incorporation of synthetic fibers, particularly polyester, has become a hallmark of the fast fashion industry. While offering benefits such as affordability, high durability, and ease of care, synthetic fibers contribute significantly to the waste crisis and other environmental concerns⁴⁴.

Polyester is the most widely utilized synthetic fiber in the textile industry. Its advantages include low production costs, good tensile strength, wrinkle resistance, and color retention capabilities. These attributes render it a popular choice for a wide array of apparel, spanning from activewear to everyday garments. However, underlying these advantages lies a significant environmental impact.

One of the primary concerns with polyester lies in its non-biodegradable nature. Polyester exhibits a resistance to natural decomposition by microorganisms in the environment. Consequently, garments made from polyester persist in landfills for centuries, contributing to spatial burden and soil contamination⁴⁵. This exceedingly slow decomposition process results in a continuous

⁴¹ Annamma Joy and others, 'Fast Fashion, Sustainability, and the Ethical Appeal of Luxury Brands' (2012) 16 Journal of Business Research 273.

⁴² Rita Kant, 'Textile Dyeing Industry Environmental Hazard' (2012) 4 Natural Science 22.

⁴³ Thomas Wiedmann and others, 'Scientists' Warning on Affluence' (2020) 11 Nature Communications 1.

⁴⁴ 'Corporate Sustainability Reporting in the Apparel Industry' (2015) 64 International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management 377.

⁴⁵ Gustav Sandin and Greg M Peters, 'Environmental Impact of Textile Reuse and Recycling – A Review' (2018) 184 Journal of Cleaner Production 353.

accumulation of textile waste, contributing to global waste management issues. Consequently, there is a significant increase in the volume of textile waste ending up in landfills or being incinerated, leading to environmental pollution and the wasteful squandering of resources.

Beyond issues of biodegradability, polyesters also shed microplastic fibers during laundering. These minute fibers detach from garments during the washing process and enter wastewater systems. Due to their diminutive size, microplastic fibers frequently bypass water filtration systems, ultimately accumulating in rivers, lakes, and oceans⁴⁶. The ubiquitous presence of microplastics in aquatic environments poses a significant threat to marine life. Marine organisms, including fish and shellfish, are susceptible to ingesting microplastics, which can lead to digestive disruption, organ damage, and even mortality. Furthermore, microplastics have the capacity to adsorb hazardous chemicals from the surrounding environment, thereby acting as vectors for pollutants to enter the food chain⁴⁷.

Exploitation of low wage workers

The fast fashion industry, characterized by its provision of up-to-the-minute trends at accessible prices, often obscures a disturbing reality of worker exploitation beneath its veneer of glamour. The imperative to produce garments in high volumes and at minimal cost compels fast fashion brands to seek out production locations with the lowest possible labor costs, predominantly situated in developing nations. This pursuit results in

detrimental labor practices, including suppressed wages, unsafe working conditions, excessive working hours, and violations of fundamental human rights⁴⁸.

The fast fashion business model is driven by extreme cost pressures. Brands compete to offer consumers the lowest possible prices, which in turn puts pressure on suppliers and factories to reduce production costs⁴⁹. Consequently, garment workers in developing nations frequently encounter substandard working conditions, inadequate wages, and infringements upon their labor rights⁵⁰.

Bangladesh stands as one of the world's foremost hubs for fast fashion manufacturing. The garment industry in Bangladesh accounts for a substantial proportion of the nation's exports and provides employment for millions of workers, predominantly women. However, working conditions within Bangladeshi garment factories are frequently a matter of grave concern. Laborers are subjected to protracted working hours for exceedingly low wages, often falling below the stipulated minimum wage⁵¹. The Rana Plaza building, which housed several garment factories producing apparel for prominent fast fashion brands, collapsed, resulting in the death of over 1,100 workers and injuries to

This tragedy exposed the unsafe working conditions and exploitative practices prevalent in Bangladesh's garment industry. Data from the Clean Clothes Campaign indicates that numerous victims and survivors of the Rana Plaza tragedy received inadequate compensation and face ongoing economic hardship⁵². The Rana Plaza tragedy

⁴⁶ Mark Anthony and others, 'Accumulation of Microplastic on Shorelines Worldwide: Sources and Sinks' (2011) 45 Environmental Science & Technology 9175.

⁴⁷ Chelsea M Rochman and others, 'Long-Term Field Measurement of Sorption of Organic Contaminants to Five Types of Plastic Pellets: Implications for Plastic Marine Debris' (2012) 47 Environmental Science & Technology 1646.

⁴⁸ Locke, R. M. (2013). The promise and limits of private power: Promoting labor standards in a global economy. Cambridge University Press

⁴⁹ Appelbaum, R. P., & Gereffi, G. (2012). Value chains, crises, and global governance: Toward a more sustainable global economy?. Contexts, 11(2), 44-51.

⁵⁰ Ross, S. A. (2015). Fast fashion: Corporate social responsibility and the role of worker safety. Business and Society Review, 120(2), 251-279.

⁵¹ Abdullah Al Masud and others, 'Corporate Social Responsibility of Bangladeshi Garment Industry to Secure Future Vulnerability on Workers Retired Life' (2013) 3 Developing Country Studies 32.

⁵² Clean Clothes Campaign, 'Compensating the Victims of Rana Plaza Resolving the Funding Crisis' (2015).

incited widespread international condemnation and underscored the urgent need for improvements in working conditions within the Bangladeshi garment industry. Following this devastating event, several initiatives, including the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh and the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety, were established with the aim of enhancing occupational safety and labor conditions in Bangladeshi garment factories⁵³. However, despite the progress achieved, significant challenges remain in ensuring workers' rights and occupational safety within the Bangladeshi garment industry.

The garment industry in India grapples with significant issues pertaining to worker exploitation. Garment laborers in India frequently endure inhumane working conditions coupled with exceedingly low wages⁵⁴. Moreover, instances of child labor are still widely reported in the Indian garment industry, notably in informal settings and smaller, home-based manufacturing operations⁵⁵. Child laborers are frequently compelled to work in hazardous conditions, enduring long hours for minimal wages. Child labor is a deeply concerning issue within the fast fashion industry. The Zari embroidery industry, renowned for its use of gold and silver threads to embellish garments, often implicates child laborers in precarious and unsafe working environments, particularly in the Uttar Pradesh region of India. This region serves as a supplier of materials or finished garments to a range of brands, including those engaged in fast

fashion. The circumstances of workers in the Zari embroidery industry have been characterized as "miserable" and indicative of a "poverty-ridden condition." This state of economic vulnerability may compel artisan families to engage their children in Zari-Zardozi work as a means of supplementing the family income⁵⁶. Child labor encompasses the employment of children below the legally permissible minimum working age, frequently under hazardous and exploitative conditions. This practice deprives children of their childhood, disrupts their education, and jeopardizes their physical and psychological well-being. Forced labor practices remain a concern in some garment factories in India. Migrant workers are particularly vulnerable to forced labor due to their susceptibility to deception and exploitation by factory owners and labor recruitment agencies⁵⁷. Forced labor inflicts a devastating impact on its victims. Survivors of forced labor endure profound physical and psychological trauma, in addition to the deprivation of their liberty, dignity, and opportunities for personal development.

Indonesia is also a notable producer in the fast fashion industry. While the minimum wage in Indonesia is comparatively higher than that of Bangladesh or India, garment workers in Indonesia still encounter significant challenges, including protracted working hours, substandard working conditions, and inadequate social protection. An investigative report by the Workers Rights Consortium (WRC) in 2021 revealed

⁵³ Sarah Ashwin, Naila Kabeer and Elke Schüßler, 'Contested Understandings in the Global Garment Industry after Rana Plaza' (2020) 51 *Development and Change* 1297.

⁵⁴ Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work Branch Office, International Labour, 'Working Conditions Of Migrant Garment Workers In India: A Literature Review' (2017).

⁵⁵ Eric V. Edmonds and Nina Pavcnik, 'Child Labor in the Global Economy' (2005) 19 *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 202.

⁵⁶ Komal Mittal and Poonam Singh, 'Problems of Life and Livelihood of Zari-Zardozi Workers in Western Uttar-Pradesh' (2021) 9 *South Asian Journal of Social Studies and Economics* 9.

⁵⁷ Stephen John New, 'Modern Slavery and The Supply Chain: The Limits of Corporate Social Responsibility?' (2015) 20 *Supply Chain Management* 697.

labor rights violations at PT Gunung Salak Sukabumi, a garment factory in Sukabumi, West Java, Indonesia, producing apparel for international fast fashion brands. The report further indicated that numerous garment workers, dismissed during the pandemic, were denied full or partial entitlements to critical compensation. This constitutes a violation of labor laws and a denial of workers' rights obligations on the part of brands and retailers whose clothing was manufactured by these workers⁵⁸. This case illustrates that despite the existence of labor regulations in Indonesia, their implementation remains weak, and exploitative practices persist within the garment industry. The case also underscores the need for more stringent government oversight and greater accountability from fast fashion brands to ensure the protection of workers' rights throughout their supply chains.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant environmental and ethical issues posed by the fast fashion industry through the lens of green criminology. The research underscores how fast fashion contributes to environmental degradation, excessive textile waste, and exploitative labor practices. Despite efforts by corporations to adopt sustainability initiatives, greenwashing remains prevalent, and true systemic change is still lacking. By comparing fast fashion to slow fashion, this paper demonstrates that sustainable alternatives exist, emphasizing ethical labor practices, eco-friendly materials, and mindful consumption. Green criminology frameworks reveal that corporate irresponsibility in the industry perpetuates environmental harm and social injustice, necessitating stronger legal accountability and regulatory measures. Moving forward, it is crucial to advocate for comprehensive policies that enforce corporate responsibility, promote circular fashion models, and encourage consumer

awareness. Future research should focus on evaluating the effectiveness of existing sustainability initiatives, exploring legal mechanisms for corporate accountability, and investigating the role of consumer behavior in shaping a more sustainable fashion industry. The transition to a more ethical and environmentally responsible fashion sector requires collaboration among policymakers, corporations, and consumers. By prioritizing sustainability and corporate accountability, the industry can move toward a future that balances economic growth with ecological and social justice.

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⁵⁸ Worker Rights Consortium, 'Investigasi Di Indonesia' (2021)

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