

Abrams resisted
(Abrams and Sattar,
2017). While first

[Business](#), [Industries](#)



Abrams and Sattar (2017) recently published an article in “The New York Times” about Bangladesh and how it is known for its cheap and productive labor. It is the second largest producer of low-cost textiles in the world, behind China (Ahmed, 2013) and Bangladesh’s textile manufacturing industry accounts for 79% of the Bangladesh’s GDP (Ahmed, 2013). Yet behind this productive façade there are key exploitations that drive its success, such as unsafe working conditions, low pay, long hours, and no functioning unions due to the increasing demand for cheaper labor and higher production.

This prolonged abuse caused protest over the rights of the workers in these Bangladeshi Factories, Abrams and Sattar (2017) explained. But aside the previously mentioned exploitations, according to Ahmed (2013), Bangladeshi workers also face low pay. Sometimes the workers’ compensation is as low as \$0.

32 cents an hour (Ahmed, 2013). Additionally, this lack of basic rights, and alarming working conditions caused the death of over 1. 100 workers in 2013 (Abrams & Sattar, 2017). This tragedy was due to employees of the factory being forced to participate in the same exploitative situations explained previously and were threatened with loss of pay or employment if they resisted (Abrams & Sattar, 2017). While first world nations may consider the problem of captive employment to only be restricted to third world countries, it is not. A second example involves working conditions in first world markets such as American prisons. According to Sykes (1956) employment during incarceration is considered a part of rehabilitation.

The work is meant to allow prisoners to learn responsibility; dependability and life skills useable upon release, he explains. While acquiring such life skills is often what is the perceived and intended purpose of labor, the reality of prison employment rehabilitation programs is different. “The Economist” recently reported in an article titled Prison labor is a billion dollar industry (2017) that private manufacturing companies profit billions a year off of the captive labor of inmates. Blau & Grinberg (2016) elaborated that, in 2016, across 24 states in the United States, 50,000 prisoners protested against the prison work program, one of the largest inmate strikes in American history. The decision to protest arose from claims of, similar to that of workers in Bangladesh, unsanitary/unsatisfactory working conditions, low, or in some cases, the absence of salary, an inability to stop participation in the program and ultimately, because of the profiteering prison labor system (Blau & Grinberg, 2016). The strike, as further explained by Blau & Grinberg (2016), pushed several of the prisons into a temporary lock down due to the refusal of the prisoners to participate in their scheduled tasks and many prisoners had objected to leave their cells when commanded by authority.

Thus, captive labor is a problem seen throughout the world within the manufacturing industry but in differing ways, although, it is not without similarity. Ergo, its large-scale presence makes it a significant world issue. The morality of captive labor should be assessed because its practices affect millions of families and with further awareness change can be brought. Therefore, the main question is, to what extent is the manufacturing industry based on captive employees morally acceptable? In research of this topic, a literature review will be used. The literature review consists of academic

articles and several newspaper articles about the two contrasting moral viewpoints of deontology and utilitarianism, captive employment, and relevant current events pertaining to the matter of captive labor within the manufacturing industry. This information was compiled using university provided platforms, such as the University Library and online academic archives.

The second section will focus on the definitions of important phrases and vocabulary such as captive labor and morality to help bring simplicity and understanding to the arguments discussed. Also included in the second section will be an explanation of philosopher Immanuel Kant's theory of deontology and the contrasting ideology by Jeremy Bentham of utilitarianism. In the third section, the aforementioned information will be used to dispute the moral legitimacy of captive labor in the manufacturing industry.

The third section will be directly followed by an explanation of limitations of this research and suggestions for further inquiry into the topic of captive labor in the manufacturing industry and morality. Finally, the dispute will be concluded using information given throughout the literature review to determine to what extent captive labor is moral in the manufacturing industry. The conclusion will then followed by a collection of the references used throughout the literature review. First of all, to achieve understanding in the following sections of this article key terms and ideas will be defined.

Captive employment is described as employees with an absence of outside opportunities (Abrams & Sattar 2017, Prison labour is a billion dollar 2017).

Captive laborers in the United States and third world countries such as Bangladesh are forced to participate in repetitive jobs. American captive employees are coerced into doing menial jobs and physically intensive tasks including manufacturing during incarceration as punishment or rehabilitation but in modern times captive labor has been viewed as immoral and less accepted as a valid form of reformation due to progressive human rights and contemporary ideology on morality of involuntary labor (Prison labour is a billion dollar, 2017). While many third world countries suffer from the situation of legal captive labor due to lower labor standards and poverty (Neumayer & De Soysa, 2006), a loophole that allows a developed nation such as the United States to keep up with legal forced employment and which also allows private manufacturing companies to profit from inmates is found in the 13th amendment of the United States constitution. The 13th amendment was founded 1865 and is the notion that abolished slavery except under the circumstance that it is used as punishment for a crime. Secondly, to understand how captive employment is linked to morality, it must be explained. Morality can be defined as how one's beliefs are shaped by the social world around him/her or what one recognizes as just due to social norms and expectations or how society uniformly accepts or rejects certain practices (Blasi, 1990). The morality of captive employment in United States prisons is argued with the principle that the program is for rehabilitation (Sykes, 1956).

Rehabilitation is characterized as teaching and educating inmates about life skills that allow them to more easily re-assimilate into society in hopes it will hinder reoffend (Phelps, 2011). Although, rehabilitation is only used as a loophole to retain legality of captive labor in the United States, captive employment is universally and ultimately used as a way to increase profits by cutting production costs by private companies (Prison labor is a billion dollar, 2017). While the above-mentioned definitions are helpful to understand the jargon, they alone do not determine morality of forced labor. To help determine the integrity of the use of involuntary labor two philosophical viewpoints are discussed. The two opposing views that help justify the morality of actions and consequences are the deontological and utilitarian views. Firstly, 18th century theorist, Immanuel Kant, created the theory of deontology. Deontology states, according to Conway & Gawronski (2013) that morality of a situation is hinged to the accepted norms of society and rules, such as the example that murder is bad because it is illegal. In contrast, the alternative view of utilitarianism that was developed by philosopher Jeremy Bentham, implies that morality is based on the situations outcomes not the act itself (Conway & Gawronski, 2013).

As an example, utilitarianism would agree that it would be acceptable for a doctor to euthanize a healthy patient, against their will, for the sake of using their organs to save several other sick patients. Deontological and utilitarian views are crucial to understanding morality because they give contrasting insight into how situations are viewed as moral or immoral. If both conclude that captive labor is immoral we have no other choice but to accept this as a universal truth. Now that relevant terms have been clarified, this section will

discuss and compare the two contrasting viewpoints of deontology and utilitarianism.

The deontological view, also known as non-consequentialism, says means cannot justify ends (Conway & Gawronski, 2013). When examining captive labor with the deontological view, it would be easy to assume it as immoral. This is because accepted social norms are against involuntary labor. The intended outcomes of rehabilitation and higher profits do not justify the unsatisfactory treatment and working conditions of captive laborers. An employee is classified as a person who voluntarily contracts himself in exchange for compensation (Simon, 1951) thus, making captive employment not employment at all because it is not voluntary nor is the compensation sufficient for the amount effort expended, rather making it modern day slavery. Slavery is, as clear to many, not a accepted social norm in a modern context. Deontology also stresses that human rights must be considered in actions regardless of the potential benefit of the outcomes (Portmore, 1996), meaning that one's rights should not be violated in order for the other party's welfare to increase. Human right, as defined by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), is " the right to be free from torture, arbitrary arrest and detention" and " the right to work, the right to rest, and the right to leisure" (Risse & Skikkink, 1999, p.

2). Due to the exploitative nature of captive labor it can be considered a violation of human right as many of the above mentioned basic human rights are absent in the treatment of captive employees. The Utilitarian view, on the other hand, also known as consequentialism, says the ends can justify

action if the ends are positive or create more welfare than was lost through the action (Habibi, 2007). At face value, when the latter is applied to captive labor markets such as those in the United States and Bangladesh, this assumes forced employment as moral. The unfortunate situation of underpaid, overworked, and neglected employees comes with the favorable outcome of rehabilitation and a lesser rate of re-offence upon release in the United States (Sykes, 1956) and the outcome of higher profit and more investment in third world countries such as Bangladesh (Neumayer, & De Soysa, 2006). If convicts do not reoffend, which would create less crime and companies turn more profit which, according to Cowen & Tabarrok (2015), allows for cheaper products and potential expansion which results in creation of more jobs.

If implemented in this way, captive labor would then indeed have created more welfare than was potentially destroyed by the abuse. While the captive labor market harms its workers, it also allows a reliable income and employment when options are limited or absent entirely. It is initially harmful to the worker but its outcomes benefit not only the people participating and the manufacturing companies but also their families who depend on the employment (Powell & Zwolinski, 2011).

Thus, by the utilitarian view, the poor treatment, unsafe environments and petty pay is moral due to the “ positive” outcomes. Ergo, as Habibi (2007) argues, the utilitarian outlook allows for the most support of human rights because its principles promote the welfare of the most amounts of people because although some were harmed when the action took place, many

more were potentially benefited by the consequence of said actions. Now that utilitarianism and deontology have been explained, this section will focus on comparing the two stances. While deontology and utilitarianism have interesting stances, it is believed that, as theorized by Williams (1979), utilitarian ideals permit and promote “ socially unacceptable” behaviors. He contends that this line of thinking often attempts to rationalize actions that are clearly immoral under any circumstance. Williams (1979) goes on to explain that utilitarianism is often implemented when the agent does something they are aware is against common norms and wish to diminish their own emotional response, making the use of utilitarian principles rarely rational.

Ultimately, captive labor in the manufacturing industry may bring about some potentially positive outcomes, such as “ rehabilitation” in America and excess employment in Bangladesh, it is not fair to say that these “ goods” or end products make the action moral due to the initial exploitation of the worker never being moral or just in modern society. Moreover, utilitarian views are not a valid point of reference when considering moral legitimacy of actions but rather a coping mechanism for those who have participated in acts they are aware are dishonest (Williams, 1979). Deontology however provides a sound idea due to its base being in the moral framework accepted by society and its use minimizes risk of violating any human rights (Portmore, 1996). Portmore (1996) reasoned that deontology is sympathetic to all human nature and human needs, not just those who benefit from outcome of the initial action, which is absent in utilitarianism. Deontology claims that, as said by Trianosky (1990), if the attributes behind the action

are good, the consequence is always just. Therefore, actions that are produced in righteousness will always lead to a sound mind and acceptance within society. Finally, in this section, before conclusions are given, it must be stated that these findings are provisional.

There are information gaps that should be addressed in further research to be able come to more sound conclusions. The main issue discovered was that there is minimal research done on where the line of morality of labor stops and ends and at what circumstance labor is considered immoral.

Captive labor in manufacturing industries are extreme cases but according to the logic used in the research above, there could be less extreme cases of captive labor. One such case could be that working a job one does not want to work, such as a lawyer having to bartend due to a failing economy and a shortage of employment, but must stay due to financial constraints, is immoral. Thus, further insight is required to find the tipping point of where aspects of labor are considered moral or immoral. Understanding when employment becomes captive makes its existence less subjective in terms of social acceptance and is key to determining its definite morality.

Moreover, if this issue of what attribute of labor cause labor to be considered captive labor was addressed further, it is likely that results would yield that captive labor is considered captive when the following two conditions are satisfied; firstly, the laborer earns a menial wage in comparison to other workers in the same market around the world and secondly, when labors are refused of basic rights such as sanitary and safe working conditions and are subject to termination or loss of income if there is objection to participate

under the two previously mentioned situations. Conclusively, the goal of this research was to discover whether captive labor is morally legitimate in the manufacturing industry. The main finding was that utilitarianism offers a view that can skew the perception of morality convincing one that socially unjust practices, such as captive labor, are just. The aforementioned view is not a valid outlook due to its basis being in emotional dissonance and does not offer true justification of actions according to what is socially accepted as right or moral. Deontology offers more sound judgment in terms of morality of situations as it incorporates societal values and accepted norms.

Thus, due to the violation of human rights in the use of utilitarianism and the presence of social interest in the use of deontology, it is concluded that captive labor is negatively related to moral legitimacy in the manufacturing industry.