

# Moral Issues in Textile Production

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## Abstract

Textile manufacturing has become a big industrial sector after industrial revaluation age that textile products are started to be manufactured as industrial items instead of as art and craft pieces.

Textile sector, as labor intensive manufacturing sector, is generally a locomotive sector for the developing countries. It is a model sector for the other possible industrial sectors from the practical view point of employment, large scale production, and export. A settled ethical structure of textile production and business frame would help such countries to improve their business, manufacturing, and industries on the strong ethical background. Introduction of new ethical approaches are also a fatal need for the developed countries to reshape their vision on environmental matters and consumer behaviors.

Main ethical concerns in the textile processing stages can be classified under three main groups of labor rights, environmental approaches and marketing strategies. This paper concerns about these critical ethical dilemma points in the textile production stages in universal platform. Problematic cases in the less developed countries' textile production policies and well developed countries' textile marketing policies will be discussed from the view of ethic.

**Key words:** Clean textile, labour, environment, consumer behaviors

## 1. Introduction

Fiber based textile and clothing products are one of the main consumer oriented items, their consumption has been promptly increasing over the world. Per capita fiber consumption is increased nearly 39%, from 8.5 kilograms in 2000 to 12.0 kilograms, corresponding roughly 82 million tons in 2011 [1-3]. Annual fiber market growth has been changing between 1.5 % and 3.0 % correlating with growth in population and increase in real per capita incomes (Figure 1). Altering economic conditions in various region of the world affects the fiber and textile market growths, however in average, 120,000 to 240,000 tons of additional textile fibers in quantity terms are consumed in the world every year [2].

Textile and apparel sector of Turkey has been one of the leading sectors of Turkey from the view of export income, employment capacity, and economical benefit potential. Industrial sized manufacturing phase of the sector has started its accelerated improvement in Turkey during 1980's, while the sector has already completed its mature periods in most of the developed countries [4].

Maturing period for the Turkish textile and apparel manufacturing sector has started after 1980's as result of governmental promotions and open foreign market policies [5]. Textile and apparel manufacturing capacity opening of the developed countries has recovered by flourishing Turkish textile and apparel sector since about 30 years.

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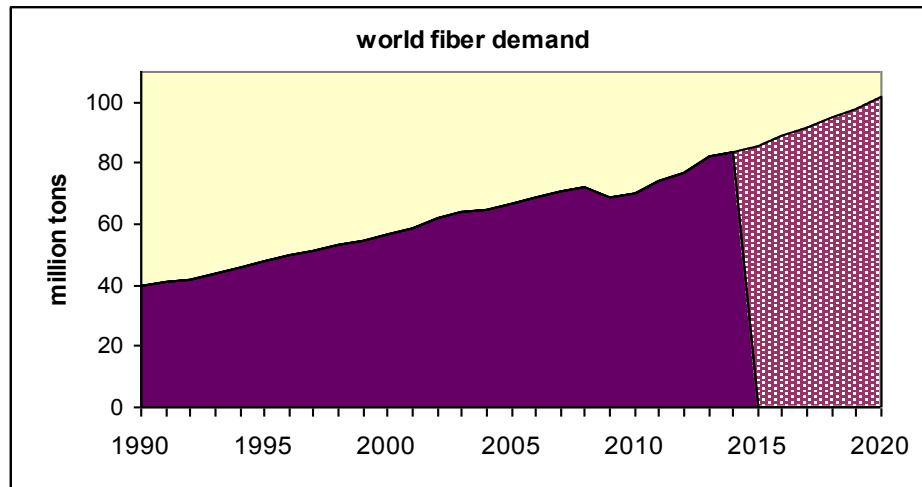


Figure 1. World fiber demand, million tones

Currently, annual export volume of Turkish textile and apparel sector in the world markets is about US\$25 billion USD. Manufacturing purposed machinery investment in the sector has reached up to US\$100 in integrated and advanced technology and is still continuing [6]. Currently sector is overwhelming other economic turnover of the country and has the dragging effect over the other sectors [7]. According to the Official State Plans of the Turkey, it has been aimed that in 2023, the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Republic, annual total export income of the sector should reach about to US\$72 billion [8-10].

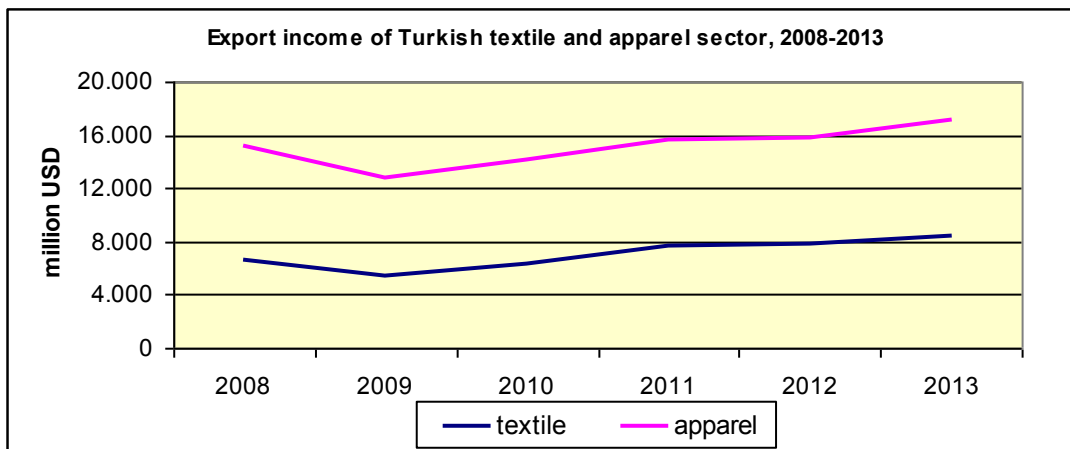


Figure 2 . Textile and apparel export income of Turkey for 2008-2013

**Turkish textile and apparel sector is increasing its export income constantly as it has shown in**

Figure 2. The sector is one of the main export oriented manufacturing sector of the Turkish economy with derivation of the highest foreign trade surplus. Beside foreign trade income of the

sector, domestic consumer market volume of Turkey is also constantly enlarging, to furnish new employment capacities for the sector.

According to annual report of the General Secretariat of Istanbul Textile and Apparel Exporter Associations (ITKIB) for 2009, there are approximately 7,500 textile manufacturers and 11,000 apparel manufacturers in Turkey [6].

This paper aims to review the current moral issues in textile and clothing sector over the world and Turkey. As labour and energy intensive sector textile and clothing sector have direct influences on working life of sectoral workers, and other aliens with environment. Paper also involves with the current initiations that are aiming to enhance moral issues over the world and in Turkish textile and clothing sector.

## **2. Moral Issues in Global Textile and Clothing Sector**

Textile and clothing sector is known as labour and energy intensive sector which causes human resource, human rights and environment centered concerns. Production, processing, utilization and recycling stages of any textile and clothing item has several different moral issue interactions of labour rights, child labour, waste water management, environmental friendly production methods, energy consumption, and recycling. There are several organizations, campaigns and initiatives about enhancement of moral issues in textile and clothing sector over the world.

### ***2.1. Global sector***

World textile and clothing market has divided into two main parts of producing countries and consuming countries. Developed countries are mainly consumer centered countries and they involve with the design, marketing, and high technology processing parts of the sector. Less developed and developing countries are mostly responsible with bulk production of casual and ordinary textile and clothing items where labour costs are low or lower than most of the developed countries. Currently Asian countries, South American countries and North African countries are textile production centers of the world. Turkey, as an exception of given geographic positioning, continue its textile and clothing production competitiveness among other textile producer countries.

### ***2.2. Labour rights***

Textile and clothing sector is labour intensive sector. Especially clothing processing and production steps requires high amount of labour force which low level of education and training is mostly enough. As result of geographical positions of clothing producer countries where human rights and labour rights are not enriched to level of developed countries and low educated and non qualified labour force; deserved human right policies are not fully given to textile and clothing workers.

Labour right problems are mostly concentrated on long working hours-short resting hours, inconvenient working places and resting places, inadequate labour health and occupational safety actions, low salaries, unequal gender policies, child labour employment.

### ***2.3. Environmental issues***

Textile and clothing processing start with fibrous materials. Fiber based materials are classified into two main categories of natural and manmade fibers. Biodegradable properties of textile materials are important matters from the view of environmental approaches.

Another main environmental concern of textile sector is high amount of energy and water consumption. As energy intensive sector textile sector consumes electric and heat energies for machine driving, air conditioning and heating (water-steam-oil) purposes. Clean water consumption rate of textile processing is concentrated on wet processing of dyeing, and finishing processes where high amount of waste water is discharged to the nature.

#### ***2.3.1. Raw materials and chemicals***

Annual fiber consumption has been enriched to the 82 million tons in total, where more than 60% of it is manmade fibers. Most of the man made fiber processing stages and fiber itself causes undesirable environmental influences starting from the processing stages and end of their use in the landfill areas. Natural fibers also have environmentally deficiencies of insecticide and pesticide use during their growing.

Dyeing and finishing chemicals that are widely used during the wet processing stages of textile production has serious threats to the environment.

#### ***2.3.2. Waste water management***

High amount of discharged waste water of wet processing stages are one of the main environmental concern for textile industry. Most of the developed countries has high rate of water discharge tax that deters most of the companies and even countries from the textile wet processing industry.

Textile manufacturing countries should be aware of high amount of waste water discharging danger of the sector. Carefully structured waste water management strategies and policies should be raised for the sake of textile producers and environmental concerns.

#### ***2.3.3. Environmental friendly products, production and processing methods***

Textile and clothing production stages should be revised and improved in order to save energy, labour force and water. New production methods, new machinery and new materials should be replaced to maintain more environmental friendly processing steps. Environmental effects of production stage, utilization time and recycling stage of any textile product should be analyzed and new approaches should be implemented.

## **3. Enhancement Initiations**

There have been many different national and international organizations to raise the awareness about the moral issues in textile and clothing sector. Campaigns and initiations are designed

targeting manufacturers, consumers and international authorities. Social responsibility approach has been enlarging and some of the common international brands have cautions to enhance moral issues of their products' during production, use and recycling stages.

Clean closet, clean textiles, wrap, Oko-tex 100 are some of the early initiations for the wide spreading the idea of "clean textile" over the world.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

Textile and clothing production, utilization and recycling stages are one common issue over the world. Developed countries are mostly involved with the marketing, logistics, processing machinery, chemicals and recycling stages of a textile item, while developing countries are facing the labour rights, environmental effects of production stages, energy and water saving projects, and waste water recycling problems.

As a general movement social responsibility and moral issues awareness should be raised world textile and clothing sector. Different approaches against moral issues should be managed by the aids of international and national based rules and directives.

Consumer behaviors are also important issue from the view of unnecessary textile consumption levels. Consumed textile products should be produced knowing about their production conditions and environmental effects over animals, plants and human.

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