EXPLOITATION OR EMPOWERMENT? THE IMPACT OF TEXTILE AND APPAREL MANUFACTURING ON THE EDUCATION OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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Abstract

One of the most cited criticism for US fashion brands is their exploitation of workers in their overseas manufacturing facilities. This paper studies whether such textile and apparel production facilities (also known as “sweatshops”) lead to lower educational attainment and thus a lower socio-economic status for women working in them. Results suggest it is not as a clear-cut conclusion. Evidence suggests a higher ratio of women receive primary education as apparel and textile exports increase while at the secondary level of education however, the results suggest the opposite. We also evaluate to see if women marry at a later age as a result of working in these factories, yet fail to find any conclusive evidence.

Keywords: educational attainment, textile and apparel industry, sweatshops