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Walmart Woes

As the world's largest retailer, Wal-Mart has dominated the headlines in the recent times for wrong reasons. It seems the giant company cannot stay away from the limelight, especially with online fanatics who discuss its conduct in various forums and sites. In the last few years, there have always been winners and losers or victims of the circumstances in every social detraction connected to Walmart. The employees, suppliers, and other stakeholders would always have their own side of the story.

The documentary on the treatment of employees at Walmart describes the company as the one that does not take care of its most valuable resource. Despite the company making huge profits, it is still known for its low wages paid to the employees. The low wage situation at Walmart is so serious that the company even guides its own employees on how to receive government assistance ("Beautiful Mind"). The employees no longer feel proud to be associated with a company that does not take care of its human resources as effectively as it used to. At its overseas factories, Walmart provides the employees with substandard working conditions. The international labour rights fund revealed that the company denies minimum wages to its sweatshop employees located in China, Swaziland, Nicaragua, Bangladesh, and Indonesia. These employees are also not provided with legally mandated health care and often work overtime without getting paid extra.

In the United States, Walmart forces its workers to work for long hours while paying minimum wages to them. The company also stopped offering health insurance to its part-time employees while offering the health insurance at higher premiums, which is more than what the full-time workers could afford. In 2012, the employees complained of working under dangerous conditions including excessive dust, broken equipment, unfair speed quotas, as well as exposure to abnormal heat and chemicals that lead to nosebleeds and dizziness.

The company also strongly opposes trade unions; it even closed its newly opened outlet in Canada because the employees formed a union. The lack of unionization is the most critical issue that makes the employees feel mistreated but they cannot complain about the unfair conditions because there is no organization to fight for their rights. The rights and welfare of the workers are of no importance to the top management ("Beautiful Mind"). In the document titled "*Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Prices*", Robert Greenwald describes how he interviewed a number of employees of this giant retailer company, and all of them admitted unfair treatment from their superiors.

Walmart also employs undocumented immigrants to wash its stores and the management forces them to work every day without offering them overtime pay. It has also been reported that in other foreign factories that manufacture Walmart branded products, top managers violate the rights of the workers. Some of the complaints from the employees included locked bathrooms, firing and blacklisting of employees who try to fight for their rights, denial of healthcare, pregnancy tests, and starvation wages. With such conditions, the company would be in direct violation of the workers'

rights and needs to make numerous changes urgently to right the wrong at its outlets and factories.

The owners also sneak their way into getting huge tax breaks from the government but still manage to evade local taxes by relocating its stores outside the urban area. The greed of the top management is also evidenced in the slight wage hikes that still leave the employees below the poverty line ("Beautiful Mind"). The greed is also demonstrated by the way the managers conduct themselves in comparison to the way the employees are treated and paid. The top managers continue to enjoy various benefits including healthy pay while leaving their employees to survive with the low pay. This is seen as a strategy by the directors to silence the managers and use them to exploit the employees. When mistreated, therefore, the employees have no one to report to as the managers are being controlled.

Despite all the negativity against Walmart, there is a brighter and optimistic side that most people would not know even exists. In a documentary titled "Why Wal-Mart works; and why that drives some people crazy", the reasons behind the success of Walmart are explored (Nicholas n.d). In this documentary, it is mentioned that the main reason for the vast criticism of the giant company is jealousy. According to the author of this documentary, the only problem that exists with Walmart, is that they do not know how to tell their own story which results in poor PR. The documentary suggests that the company should come out and protect itself by letting people know exactly what is happening.

It is normal for market leaders like Walmart to have enemies. Most people would be jealous of big success such as the one this company enjoys. Their failure to respond to such allegations could ruin their business. However, most of the allegations against the company have evidence and have been revealed by established organizations, such as international labour groups. This only means that although some of these allegations could be wrong, Walmart is still mistreating its employees. The company needs to face its problems head-on instead of pointing fingers to their rivals for spreading rumours about the company.