

# ***Analysis of the Application of Modern Slavery in Responsible Business***

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**Abstract:** The United Nations enacted the 17 Sustainable Development Goals in 2015 and the social impact of modern business has become particularly important, but unfortunately several companies face the problem of modern slavery, this paper provides a specific analysis of Mondelēz International Inc's business practices and combines 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 16 and 17 SDGs. The 17D thinking tool is used to help companies analyse responsible business behaviour in a specific business context; a judgement is made on whether companies should eliminate modern slavery from a utilitarian and Kantian perspective respectively. The results found that companies that approach modern slavery from a utilitarian perspective are in violation of the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals. And utilitarianism has become a justification for external sophistry by multinational corporations such as Mondelez.

**Keywords:** modern slavery, modern business, 17 SDGs, 17D thinking-tool, utilitarianism & Kantianism

## **1. Introduction**

Businesses and society both benefit when both are prosperous [1]. According to the Business in the Community Network, a company's success is contingent on its ability to collaborate with other organizations for the good of the economy, environment, and society. It is anticipated that this will result in positive multiplier effects that address significant community concerns. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations are a global call for individuals and businesses to find solutions to the world's most pressing problems in order to advance global peace and prosperity [2]. These ideas are similar to those of BITC. Directly as a result of these guiding principles, the idea of responsible business was born. A "responsible business" is one that considers society, the economy, and the environment, according to the definition given by the University of Birmingham (2021). Therefore, what drives a responsible firm to accomplish what it does is the obligation to improve people's lives through ethical and equitable working practices while simultaneously conserving the environment. This essay's goal is to identify, investigate, and criticise a single ethical business practice by using a variety of tools and tactics in particular business contexts in order to reach an ethical conclusion. The findings of this essay will serve as the foundation for this decision. In order to enhance people's lives and achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals established by the United Nations, a responsible firm must take socioeconomic and socioenvironmental findings into consideration, as well as operate in an ethical manner.

## 2. Analysis of the Identified Business Practice

The most important stakeholders in every company are the workers, and they play a critical role in ensuring the company's success. Despite the concerted efforts of governments and civil society to eradicate human rights violations and slavery, the UK's Office of National Statistics has published a report indicating a 51% increase in the number of modern slavery offenses reported for the year ending in March 2019 compared to the prior period [3]. It is thought that the prevalence of modern slavery in commercial enterprises has increased in the twenty-first century. This development is a result of the abundance of multinational firms and the complexity of their supply chains. Additional reasons contributing to modern-day slavery have been identified as rising consumer demands, which put pressure on suppliers to complete sizable orders quickly and affordably [4]. Modern-day slavery is influenced by several other variables, including poverty, discrimination, and corruption. Modern slavery occurs when "one person deprives another of their liberty in order to exploit them for personal or commercial gain," as described by the Leeds City Council [5]. Modern-day slavery is a practice that occurs in supply chains and includes the use of child labor, forced labor in prison, employing workers for exploitative wages, and overworking laborers.

Mondelez International Inc. is one business that has frequently been used as an example of one that has faced accusations of modern-day slavery in its global supply chain. This most recent instance occurred in March 2022 [6]. Its principal ingredient, cocoa beans, are sourced from a number of nations, including Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and Indonesia by the international confectionary company Mondelez International, which also owns the Cadbury chocolate brand. The company has previously been the target of criticism on matters pertaining to modern slavery, particularly those involving underage labor. According to reports, stakeholders can work together to address the core cause of modern-day slavery in the cocoa business, which has been identified as extreme poverty in farming districts [6]. This is according to advocacy groups that are fighting against the practice of child slavery in the cocoa industry. However, Mondelez, bolstered by the results of its own study, insists that a rise in cocoa prices alone should not be considered a solution to the issue of child labor in the cocoa business. According to the corporation, the majority of farmers only produce little portions of their land, and as a result, a rise in the price of cocoa will not significantly enhance their overall revenue. During this time, Mondelez continues to place a primary emphasis on its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs that are part of the Cocoa for Life Program. This program offers educational opportunities to youngsters living in the regions where it sources its cocoa. There is no way to get around the fact that modern slavery is being practiced in some workplaces, despite the efforts of a great number of researchers who are seeking to end the practice.

## 3. Critique of the Responsible Business Practice Using Different Tools and Techniques

### 3.1. The 17 SDGs by the United Nations and the 17D Thinking

The idea that organizations ought to be open to the creation of legal requirements that would govern how they conduct themselves is one of the fundamental ideas of responsible business practice. Human rights are one of the few laws that are "erga omnes," which translates to "rights towards everyone," according to the International Court of Justice [7]. This means that they apply to everyone, regardless of their financial status, religion, age, gender, or political affiliation. The UK's current legal framework upholds and ensures the observance of human rights objectives. The Modern Slavery Act 2015 is one such law, which forbids anyone from participating in any kind of modern slavery in the UK. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations define the fundamental ideas of human rights on a worldwide scale through SDG number 8 on decent work and economic growth and SDG number 16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions. Target outcome 8.7

of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) calls for all forms of child labor, forced labor, human trafficking, and modern-day slavery to be abolished by the year 2025. The abuse, exploitation, all forms of violence, and torture of children, as well as any other form of child abuse, are specifically condemned in Outcome 16.2, on the other hand. A group of seventeen strategic goals known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were established with the intention of streamlining decision-making, tracking progress, and outlining potential future plans. By dividing them up into four strategic priorities, they are intended to help make ethical business practices a reality.

The Center for Responsible Business created the 17D thinking tool kit to help with the analysis of ethical business conduct in a number of diverse business scenarios. A multidimensional thinking technique is used in the tool to examine how each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals is impacted by the choices made by an organization [8]. Each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) must be analyzed to determine whether it presents an opportunity, a threat, or a weakness to a specific area of a company's operations. This analysis is done in three steps: conducting a SWOT analysis for each of the 17 SDGs, creating a responsible business map, and doing this for all 17 SDGs. When the 17D thinking method is used informally to analyze the abolition of modern slavery as a form of ethical business, it becomes clear that doing so would advance nearly every one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, especially goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 16, and 17. Modern slavery is discouraged by ethical business practices that provide competitive advantages for businesses. The 17D Thinking Tool Kit and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals both provide an explanation of these ideas.

Table 1: The contents of 1,2,3,4,5,8,10,16,17 SDGs goals [9].

Name	Contents
Goal 1	"End all types of world poverty."
Goal 2	"Achieve food security, improved nutrition, and sustainable agricultural promotion."
Goal 3	"Promote and ensure healthy lives for all people of all ages"
Goal 4	"Ensure comprehensive, equitable, and high-quality education and provide lifelong study opportunities for all individuals."
Goal 5	"Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls to flourish."
Goal 8	"Promote full employment and productivity, decent work for all, and sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth."
Goal 10	Reduce inequalities across and within nations.
Goal 16	"Support open and peaceful societies for sustainable development; establish inclusive and effective institutions at all levels."
Goal 17	"Intensify implementation techniques and revitalize the Sustainable Development Goal Partnership."

### 3.2. Application of Morality Theories

The principles of morality and ethics should undergird all aspects of acceptable business practices. The answers to the questions of whether or not certain business activities are responsible are determined by whether or not these acts are ethical. The application of moral principles to the operation of a business is what is meant by "business ethics." In order to assess whether or not modern slavery is a responsible business practice, two different morality theories might be utilized. Both utilitarianism and deontology, sometimes known as Kantianism, fall into this category. Utilitarianism can be defined as "the greatest quantity of good for the largest number of people" [10]; this is also the name of the associated moral theory. It argues that activities, rather than their intentions, should be judged according to the level of happiness they provide to the majority of people or the level to

which they contribute to the happiness of others. When considering Mondelez and the cocoa industry in the context of a utilitarian evaluation of contemporary slavery, it is possible to argue that the suffering of child laborers is negligible in comparison to the degree of benefit received by governments from the level of foreign exchange, the flavor of chocolate enjoyed by millions of people worldwide, and other factors. In light of this, utilitarian theory suggests that the elimination of modern slavery should not be seen as a responsible business practice in the context of the chocolate industry and the Mondelez corporation. This is due to the fact that contemporary slavery is a type of economic exploitation. Deontology, or Kantian moral philosophy, on the other hand, makes the claim that one should "act only in accordance with that maxim by which one may simultaneously want that it could become a universal law." According to the deontological point of view, morality should be justified by adherence to a system of norms rather than by taking consequences into account [11]. If Emmanuel Kant's deontology morality theory were to be used to govern ethical business operations, it would be influenced by both corporate ethics and policies as well as the moral compass of the people who work for a company. The Greek philosopher Deontology served as both an inspiration for and the name of Kant's deontology morality theory. The core of Kant's philosophy, which can be summed up as "Do unto others as you would have done unto you," is "Do unto others as you would have done unto you." According to this simplistic analogy, business management should be encouraged to work toward the abolition of modern slavery inside their supply chains. In addition, businesses have a better chance of avoiding punitive actions taken by governments and regulators as a result of violations if they follow the regulations that have been established and the ethical principles that have been established by governments.

### **3.3. Two Morality Theories Applied to Evaluate Modern Slavery as a Responsible Business Practice**

Modern-day slavery is still a major social and economic issue that affects all aspects of business, especially the global supply chain. In this chain, minors are often coerced into working in inhumane conditions, such as on cocoa farms. Multinational corporations continue to violate the human rights standards that have been established, despite the passage of anti-slavery legislation at the national and international levels, such as the Modern Slavery Act of 2015 in the United Kingdom. A decrease in revenues for multinational corporations is likely to result from their efforts to prevent modern-day slavery as part of socially responsible business practices. Multinational corporations such as Mondelez would claim, from a morality standpoint as supported by utilitarianism, that they provide a necessary lifeline to impoverished farmers along their supply chains. This is the perspective taken by utilitarianism. It is also possible to argue that the primary goal of businesses is to maximize the wealth of their owners, and that as a result, corporations should not worry too much about activities that take attention away from their primary goal.

## **4. Conclusion**

In this paper, we investigate how a successful and socially responsible corporation cannot be separated from the success of the society in which it operates. Slavery in its modern form is one of the challenges that modern businesses must overcome. Despite the fact that governments are exerting significant effort toward the abolition of slavery as a violation of human rights, unfortunately, the number of such crimes is continuing to rise. This is made worse by factors such as the expansion of global industry, the complexity of supply chains, and the existence of both poverty and corruption. The businesses who use child labor claim, first, that they are trying to alleviate poverty by doing so, and, second, that they do not want the current situation to alter because it will cut into their profits. On the other hand, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 17D thinking give rele-

vant strategies and instruments that may be employed by enterprises to meet global pressing needs while also maximizing profitability.

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