

# NECESSITY OF KIDSWEAR SAFETY REGULATIONS FOR INDIA: VIEWPOINT OF RETAILERS

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**ABSTRACT:** *Product safety refers to the production, distribution, and sale of products that, from various perspectives, are either potentially unsafe or inherently unsafe to consumer use. In order to make sure that the product which consumer is buying is safe, there should be some safety standards. These standards are normally designed to ensure the safety of products, activities or processes, etc.*

*The Indian kidsweare market is going to see a tremendous growth. It is important to note that no regulations for kidsweare safety are in place in India whereas in developed nation there is legislative control on Kidsweare merchandise.*

*The main aim of this study is to find out the necessity of safety regulations for Indian market from the retailers' point of view. For the study, 110 retailers were selected through stratified random sampling from Bengaluru, India, and information was collected with the help of structured and well-designed questionnaire.*

*The study concludes that, as per Indian retailers all the kidsweare in India are not safe and therefore parents are vigilant while purchasing the same. Most of the retailers also agree that parents do discuss the safety-related issue with them. Indian retailers are in favour of having standard regulations for the kidsweare for Indian market.*

**KEY WORDS:** Kidsweare, Safe Child, Safety regulation, Indian Retail, Accidental Injury

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## INTRODUCTION

A product is considered to be a tangible personal property. All consumer products must be safe and meet consumer guarantees under the product safety laws. Product safety is part of a broad consumer movement commonly referred to as consumerism. Product safety refers to the production, distribution, and sale of products that from various perspectives are either potentially unsafe or inherently unsafe to consumer use. As per Consumer Protection Act 1986, the Indian consumer has the 'right to be protected against marketing of goods and services which are hazardous to life and property'.

Most of the time consumers are not aware of the danger to come in many products they purchase. The dangers can range from faulty design features such as small parts in toys to the use of harmful substances in the manufacture of products. In order to make sure that the product which consumer buys is safe, there should be some safety standards. These standards are normally designed to ensure the safety of products, activities, processes, etc. Today, there are many rules & regulations regarding consumer product safety in India. There are generally like, the Sale of Goods Act, 1930, Consumer Protection Act, 1986, Bureau of Indian Standards and Import Policy 2012 for the safety of the consumer products. Respective regulatory bodies have their own mechanism to implement the rules. These mechanisms are operated through the Bureau of Indian Standards Act, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and the Drugs and Cosmetics Act.

Currently, in India, right to safety is applicable to specific areas like health care, pharmaceuticals and food processing, this right is extended across the domain having a serious effect on the health of the consumers or their well-being viz. Automobiles, Housing, Domestic Appliances, Travel etc. Indian kidswear market is going to see a tremendous growth. It is important to note that no regulations for kidswear safety are in place in India whereas in developed nation there is legislative control on Kidswear merchandise.

Retailers are vital to consumer product safety as they are the main interface with consumers. While every establishment in the supply chain of kidswear-from concept to customer-has some amount of accountability for kidswear safety, retailers are typically at the end of this supply chain before the garment reaches to the consumer. So the retailer has a considerable share of the responsibility for ensuring safe garments for children. By voluntarily developing a safety management system, retailers can better make sure that the garment offered or sold by them are safe.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Children are Nation's most precious resources, but as a child, they often lack the skills to protect themselves. Children and babies have no sense of danger and rely on others to keep them safe. Even safe products can be harmful if they are not used in a safe way (Zealand, 2013). Everyday items can cause harm if not assembled correctly or placed safely. All children have the right to protection. They have the right to survive, to be safe, to belong, to be heard, to receive adequate care and to grow up in a protective environment.

Clothing is an important part of everyday life. It keeps the wearer warm and protects from the weather. It may seem surprising, but clothing can also be dangerous for children.

- Children can be strangled if drawstrings or hoods get caught on items such as playground equipment, fences, or in car/bus doors.
- Children can choke on buttons that have come loose from their clothing.
- Children can be burned severely if their clothing catches fire.
- Proper supervision, safe environments, hazard awareness, and participating in age-appropriate activities all help reduce the risk of clothing related injury to Children. (Albert Health Services, 2013)

There are generally three reasons for a product to be unsafe design defects, misrepresentation as to use, or the absence of adequate or defective or insufficient warnings or instructions as to potential dangers and hazards of the product even when it is used as intended.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF QUALITY CHILDREN CLOTHES

- Good workmanship - It is the only way to ensure that the children will enjoy their favorite things
- Durable, hygienic materials - Because these clothes are washed frequently
- Comfortable fit - Clothing that is too tight reduces the sense of well-being
- Soft, supple materials/fibers - To avoid skin irritation
- High wearing comfort - To avoid stressing the body through overheating or chilling

### **Free of harmful substances**

- superior color fastness, because babies chew on nearly everything they put in their mouths
- free of allergic dyes or heavy metals, such as nickel in metal buttons
- free of banned softeners or synthetic coatings, etc.
- free of finishings that contain formaldehyde

### **Functional safety (with proper use)**

- no long cords
- no possibility of skin becoming caught in zips
- durable and safe attachment of accessories and parts, to ensure that they cannot be swallowed, etc. (OEKO-TEX, 2011)

## **SAFETY REGULATION FOR KIDSWEAR**

Government regulations and industry practices are mandatory requirement which restrains the behavior of user in many ways in an attempt to diminish injuries (Hedlund, 2000). Regulations are normally proposed in situations where the actions of one person can injure other persons who do not have the ability or opportunity to decide whether to accept the risks associated with those actions. They include laws and regulations, such as prohibiting the sale of fireworks, and mandatory standards, such as specifying that children's nightwear should be fire resistant. A common factor in whether regulation is used is the seriousness of the outcome being addressed in terms of human health. (Safety Regulations, 2015)

The number of standards and regulations for various products is continuously going up in most of the countries, particularly in developed countries. The main reason behind this is probably the increase in volume, types of varieties and technical refinement of merchandise which are getting produced and transacted every day. At present, the aim of the standards and the regulations is to comply with a variety of aims and tasks. Some of them are traditional - such as minimizing risks, providing information to consumers about the characteristics of products, providing information to producers about market needs and expectations, facilitating market transactions, raising efficiency and contributing to economies of scale.

## **ROLE OF KIDSWEAR RETAILER**

A retailer is a business that sells products and/or services to consumers for their personal family use. Retail is the final business in a distribution channel that links manufacturers to consumers (Levy, 2007). The retailer offers vital functions such as keeping inventory, breaking bulk, providing an assortment of products and providing services. Offering an assortment enables customers to pick from a broad selection of brands, design, sizes, colors, and prices at one location.

The market for kidswear is growing at an annual rate of 20%. Although the unorganized segment has a dominant share even today, the Indian kidswear sector is steadily getting organised, with new players entering at every step of the value chain. It goes without mentioning that the brands, manufacturers, retailers and other market participants can expect the joyride to continue for many years to come (Bhagat, 2015).

Whether in a retail shop or online, retailers are the initial point of call for customer. This is why normally customer associates a product with the retailer they purchased it from rather than with who made it. The customer has a right to expect that the product they are purchasing should be safe and of high quality. On account of the main interface with customers, retailers have the inimitable opportunity to help customers buy safe products and use them safely.

## **NEED OF THE STUDY**

Though Kidswear regulation are strictly imposed in developed nation, the way the Indian kidswear market is marching towards the future, makes it important to look into the safety aspects of the kidswear. At present, there is no casualty because the apparel is reported in India as compared to USA/UK, probably the main reason is blaming the parents for carelessness in case of any accident. The main purpose of this research is to establish the necessity of the Kidswear safety in India.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

It is in this context that, the present research study is undertaken:

1. To know whether parents discuss the child safety while purchasing garments for their children in both types of retail
2. To know the parameters which bothered more to parents about kidswear safety

3. To know whether both types of retailers heard of any accidental injury due to usage of kidswear
4. To know the awareness of retailer about the International safety regulations for children garments and product recall
5. To know the opinion of both types of retailers on having Standards & regulations for kidswear in India

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For this study, 110 organized and unorganized retailers who are involved in kidswear segment were selected through stratified random sampling. The data has been collected from Bengaluru in the state of Karnataka, India. To facilitate the study, Bengaluru has been divided into five strata's, i.e. East, West, North, South and Central and from each strata a sample of approx. 18 retailers have been selected.

The information was collected from retailers through a structured and well-designed questionnaire. The questionnaires were distributed to retailers of kidswear garment during Jan 2014 - June 2014. The data were collected by the team of research assistants who were aware of the local language. The research assistants explained the voluntary nature of the survey to the retailers and assured them of the anonymity of their responses. They provided each respondent with a copy of the questionnaire, explained how the questionnaire was to be filled out and collected the completed questionnaires.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Results of Chi-square Test and Descriptive Statistics for opinion of parents anything related to kidswear safety while purchasing the garments by type of retail organization

	Type of Retailer	
	Organized	Unorganized
Never	1 (1.7%)	2 (4%)
Rarely	7 (11.7%)	2 (4%)
Sometime	24 (40%)	10 (10%)
Often	18 (30%)	25 (50%)
Always	10 (16.7%)	11 (22%)

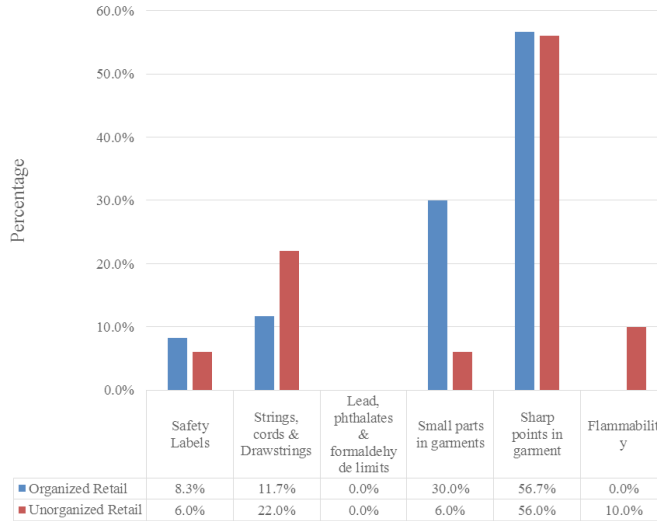
Note.  $\chi^2 = 9.230$ ,  $df = 4$ . Numbers in parentheses indicate column percentages. \* $p > .05$

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between types of retailer and their discussion with parents related to kidswear safety while purchasing the garments. The relation between these variables was not significant,  $\chi^2 (4, N = 110) = 9.230, p > .05$  and hence there is no significant difference between Organized and Unorganized retailer and their discussion with parents related to kidswear safety while purchasing the garments. It shows that almost four fifth parents discussed about the kidswear safety while purchasing the garment from both types of retail store. From this it is clear that Indian parents are concerned about safety of their children from garments they wear.

**Table 2: Results of Descriptive Statistics for retailer's opinion about parent's botheration about kidswear safety factors, by type of retail organization**

	Type of Retailer	
	Organized	Unorganized
Safety Labels	5 (8.3%)	3 (6%)
Strings, cords & Drawstrings	7 (11.7%)	11 (22%)
Lead, phthalates & formaldehyde limits	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Small parts in the garment	18 (30%)	3 (6%)
Sharp points on the garment	34 (56.7%)	28 (56%)
Flammability	0 (0%)	5 (10%)

Chart 1: Results of Descriptive Statistics for retailer’s opinion about parent’s botheration about kidswear safety factors, by type of retail organization



Retailers were asked whether parents are bothered about the listed item in the table while purchasing the garments for their children. To this, more than half retailer (56.4%) informed that parents are bothered about the sharp points in a garment which is one of the major reasons for injuries.

Almost one fifth of retailers (19.1%) confirmed that parents are concerned about the small parts of the garment for their children. The parents who do the shopping in organized retail are more concerned about the small parts in garments as compared to parents who do shopping in unorganized retail.

Strings, cords & Drawstrings is the next important factor reported by more than a fifth retailer (16.4%) which parent looks for while purchasing the kidswear. A very small amount of retailers reported that parent are also checked about safety labels (7.3%) and flammability (4.5%) while purchasing the garments for their children.

Neither organized nor unorganized retailers informed about checking of the Lead, phthalates & formaldehyde limits in the children garment by parents while purchasing the garment. This is mainly because lead, phthalates & formaldehyde limits are not having physical attributes so it is not obvious and need an expert along with special instruments and chemical to test the presence of same.

From above data, it is very clear that all the kidswear in India are not safe and there are garments which have potential to harm the children and therefore parents

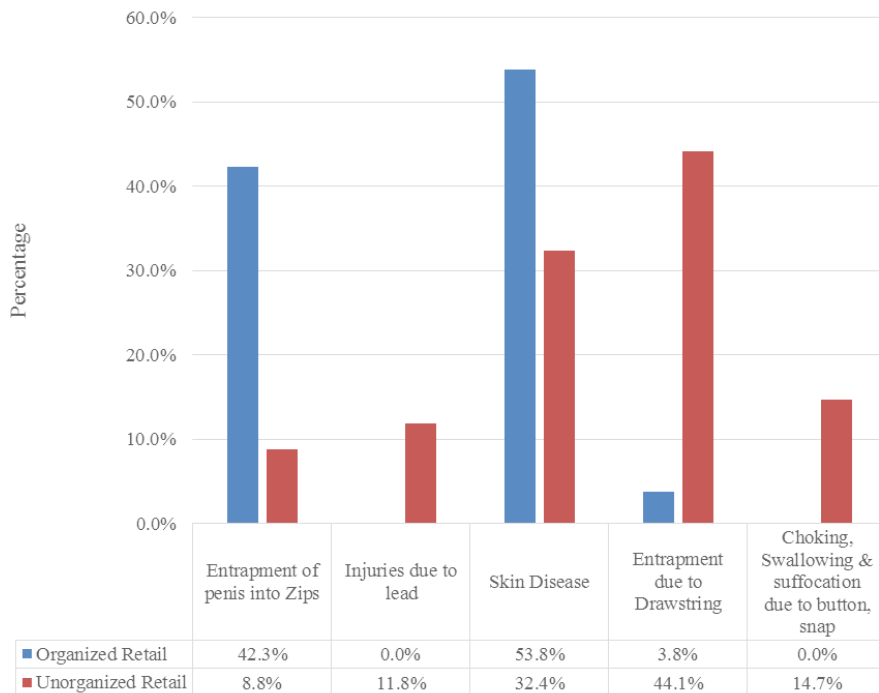


are vigilant while purchasing the same as probably they might have experienced the unsafe garments.

Table 3: Results of Descriptive Statistics for retailer’s opinions about any accidental injury, if they came across, because of Kidswear by type of retail organization

	Type of Retailer	
	Organized	Unorganized
Entrapment of penis into Zips	11 (42.3%)	3 (8.8%)
Injuries due to lead	0 (0%)	4 (11.8%)
Skin Disease	14 (53.8%)	11 (32.4%)
Entrapment due to Drawstring	1 (3.8%)	15 (44.1%)
Choking, Swallowing & suffocation due to button, snap	0 (0%)	5 (14.7%)
Others	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Chart 2: Results of Descriptive Statistics for retailer’s opinions about any accidental injury, if they came across, because of Kidswear by type of retail organization



As there is no structured data available on injuries due to usage of kidswear in India, so in order to understand the depth of the issue, data was collected from organized and unorganized retailers located in Bengaluru, Karnataka India, who are involved in selling children garments. Retailers were asked whether they heard of any accidental injury due to usage of kidswear from the parents who came for shopping to their store. Their responses, which are outlined in table 3 which clearly shows that overall retailers heard of accidental injuries to children because of usage of garments.

Out of given all injuries, as per the retailer, skin disease is the major problem (41.7%) because of the garments for their children followed by the entrapment due to the drawstring (26.7%) and entrapment of penis (23.3%) into a zip which share almost the same share of percentage. Problems related to Choking, Swallowing & suffocation due to button, snap (6.7%) and injuries related to lead (8.3%) are very small in number reported by the retailer.

Further, it is evident from the above data that, the major injuries heard by the organized retailer are Skin Disease with 53.8% and Entrapment of the penis into Zip 42.3%, whereas as per the unorganized retailer the major injuries are Entrapment due to Drawstring with 41.7%, Skin Disease with 26.7%, and Entrapment of penis into Zips with 23.3%.

From above data, it is very clear that all the kidswear in India are not safe and there are garments which have potential to harm as children are getting injured from the usage of garments.

**Table 4: Results of Chi-square Test and Descriptive Statistics for awareness of retailer about the International safety regulations for children garments by type of retail organization**

	Type of Retailer	
	Organized	Unorganized
No	24 (40%)	4 (8%)
Yes	36 (60%)	46 (92%)

Note.  $\chi^2 = 14.718$ ,  $df = 1$ . Numbers in parentheses indicate column percentages.

\* $p < .05$

Table 4 indicates responses according to type of retailer. A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between types of retailer and awareness of International safety regulations for kidswear. The relation between these variables was significant,  $\chi^2 (1, N = 110) = 14.718$ ,  $p < .05$  and hence there is a significant difference between Organized and Unorganized retailer about awareness

of International safety regulations for kidswear. The unorganized retail sector is more aware about kidswear safety regulation as compared to the organized retail sector.

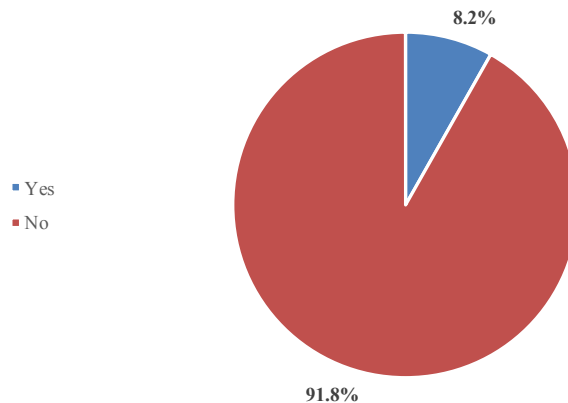
**Table 5: Awareness of Indian kidswear retailers about recall of unsafe children garments from the market**

	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	9	8.2
No	101	91.8

Sample size by number of respondents: n=110

In response to the question about awareness of Indian kidswear retailer about the recall of unsafe children’s garments from the market, as per table 5, majority of respondents (91.8 percent) said that they are not aware about the recall of unsafe garment while only a few respondent (8.2 percent) said that they are aware about the recall of unsafe garment from market.

**Chart 3: Awareness of Indian kidswear retailer about recall of unsafe children garments from the market**



**Table 6: Results of Chi-square Test and Descriptive Statistics for the opinion of retailer on having Standards & regulations for kidswear in India by type of retail organization**

	<b>Type of Retailer</b>	
	<b>Organized</b>	<b>Unorganized</b>
No	30 (50%)	4 (8%)
Yes	30 (50%)	46 (92%)

Note.  $\chi^2 = 22.528$ ,  $df = 1$ . Numbers in parentheses indicate column percentages.

\*p <.05

Table 6 indicates responses according to type of retailer. A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between types of retailer and their opinion towards India's standard and regulation for kidswear. The relation between these variables was significant,  $\chi^2 (1, N = 110) = 22.528, p < .05$  and hence there is a significant difference between the opinion of Organized and Unorganized retailer towards India's standard and regulation for kidswear. The unorganized retail sector is more interested in having standards and regulation for kidswear in India as compared to the organized retail sector.

## CONCLUSION

The primary goal of any business is to maintain excellent performance to make sure steady growth. The same rule is applicable to the retail industry as well. In order to ensure this excellent performance and distinguish from its competitors, retailer always needs to maintain the quality of its relationship and product with customers. Whatever the product is, it is vital to make sure it is safe. It is important to make sure that products must be safe and contain no hazardous substances is essential in order to bring them into a supply chain or the marketplace.

From the research study it is clear that as per Indian retailers all the kidswear in India are not safe and there are garments which have potential to harm the children and therefore parents are vigilant while purchasing the same probably they might have experienced the unsafe garments. Most of the retailers also agree that parents do discuss about the safety-related issue with them. Indian Retailers are aware about the kidswear safety regulation implemented by developed nations and few of them are already aware about the recall of unsafe garments from the market. Indian retailers are in favor of having standard regulations for the kidswear for Indian market.

Looking at booming Indian market, it is high time that Indian authorities should initiate and work for the development of kidswear safety norms. It is important to identify and reject the unsafe kid garments which may irrational and cause harm to children.

## SCOPE FOR FUTURE STUDY

There can't be a second opinion on the importance of safety of children as they are vulnerable. The present study focused only on the necessity of Safe Apparel for children. But children are not surrounded by apparels only, but children are always in contact with other products as well like toys, instruments, foods, etc. It is

very important to study the safety aspects and necessity of all the products used by children.

## **DISCUSSION**

It is found that all the kidswear in India are not safe and the research also proves that children are getting injured because of unsafe garments and majority of stakeholders wants India to have its set of kidswear safety regulations. It is right time that the government should set rules and regulations for kidswear safety in India and should work for successful implementation of it in the country. At the time of making kidswear safety norms government should bring all stakeholders, testing labs, NGOs, etc. under single roof. References can also be taken from established international kidswear safety regulations.

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