

Mandatory Uniform Dress Code Implementation and the Impact on
Attendance, Achievement, and Perceptions of Classroom Environment

by

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(ABSTRACT)

One of the many attempts to solve problems that plague America's schools is the implementation of uniform dress code policies. Those who favor uniforms contend that uniforms will increase attendance, enhance academic achievement, and improve classroom environment. Prior research studies (Behling, 1991; Hughes, 1996; and Hoffler-Riddick, 1998) on the effects of mandatory school uniforms have been inconclusive in their findings. The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of mandatory uniform dress codes on student attendance, student achievement, and teachers' perceptions of classroom environment in two middle schools. The dependent variables were student attendance, student achievement, and teachers' perceptions of classroom environment. The independent variables were gender, race/ethnicity and time/years of teaching experience. Descriptive statistics and Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) were used to analyze the data. Repeated Measures Analyses of Variance was used to analyze the attendance data in School A for three consecutive years. ANOVA was used to measure the attendance and achievement data in School B for two consecutive years. A self-report questionnaire was designed to measure teachers' perceptions of the impact of uniforms on four domains of classroom environment: student attendance, student behavior, student achievement, and students' self-image. Three-way ANOVA was used to analyze the data collected from the questionnaire.

School Uniforms

The results of this study determined that there were no statistically significant differences in overall student attendance or achievement in School A. There were improvements in student achievement in School B after the change in dress to school uniforms. There were inconsistent differences between race/ethnicity and gender with respect to attendance after uniform implementation in schools A and B. Absences increased in School A after the second year with uniforms. Student achievement improved for students in School B, but showed no change in School A. Based on the results of the Uniform Survey administered to teachers in both schools, the perception of classroom environment after uniforms was generally positive. Teachers overwhelmingly supported the uniform policy, but they were inconsistent in their opinions of the overall impact on classroom environment. Teachers in School A felt that student achievement and student self-image improved after the implementation of school uniforms, but they saw no improvements in student attendance or behavior. Teachers in School B felt that student attendance declined after the first year of uniform implementation; however, they felt that there were improvements in student behavior, student achievement, and student self-image. Future research should examine the impact of mandatory uniform dress codes on school climate, students' self-esteem, and the perceptions of parents, students and members of the community.

This dissertation is dedicated in honor of
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ii

DEDICATION iii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS iv

LIST OF TABLES ix

I. INTRODUCTION 1

 The Problem 1

 Conceptual Context 3

 Significance of Study 4

 Conceptual Model 5

 Statement of Purpose 6

 Research Questions 7

 Definition of Terms 8

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE 10

 Introduction 10

 Historical Review 10

 Legal Implications 12

 Theory of Human Motivation 13

 Adolescent Development 14

 Physical Development 14

 Emotional and Social Development 15

 Cognitive Development 15

Clothing Deprivation 16

Self-esteem 17

Effective Schools 18

School Environment 19

Attendance 19

Behavior 20

Achievement 21

Discipline 22

Innovation and Change 23

Diffusion of Innovation 24

Principal as a Change Agent 25

III. METHODOLOGY 27

 Setting 27

 Populations and Samples 30

 Data Collection and Procedures 34

 Data Analysis and Organization 41

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION 46

 Introduction 46

 Attendance for School A 47

 Attendance for School B 55

 Achievement for School A 60

Achievement for School B	64
Perceptions of Classroom Environment	68
V. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS	97
Introduction	97
Student Attendance	97
Student Achievement	98
Classroom Environment	100
Threats to Internal and External Validity	100
Limitations of the Study	101
Implications for Future Research	102
Summary	103
REFERENCES	105
APPENDICES	112
VITA	146

APPENDICES 112

 Appendix A: Summary of Uniform Studies 113

 Appendix B: Content Validation Questionnaire 117

 Appendix C: SPSS Results Table for Content Validation 125

 Appendix D: Final Questionnaire for Faculties 130

 Appendix E: Survey Use Approval Letter 137

 Appendix F: Permission to Conduct Study 139

 Appendix G: Application for IRB 141

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1 Definition of Terms	8
2 School Data Profiles	29
3 Populations and Samples for Uniform Use	32
4 Gender and Race for Student Samples	33
5 Gender and Race for Faculty Samples	35
6 Grading Scale for Achievement	37
7 Domains for Content Validation Instrument	39
8 Final Questionnaire Items	42
9 Mean Scores for Attendance in School A	49
10 Total Means for Attendance by Race and Gender	50
11 Analysis of Variance for Attendance in School A	53
12 Simple Contrast for Attendance for School A	54
13 Mean Scores for Attendance in School B	56
14 Analysis of Variance for Attendance in School B	58
15 Mean Scores for GPA in School A	61
16 Analysis of Variance for GPA in School A	63
17 Mean Scores for GPA in School B	65
18 Analysis of Variance for GPA in School B	67

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
19 Mean Scores for Teachers’ Perceptions of Attendance by Race	71
20 Mean Scores for Teachers’ Perceptions of Attendance by Gender	72
21 Mean Scores for Perceptions of Attendance by Teaching Experience	74
22 Three-way ANOVA for Attendance in School A	75
23 Three-way ANOVA for Attendance in School B	76
24 Mean Scores for Perceptions of Behavior by Race	78
25 Mean Scores for Perceptions of Behavior by Gender	79
26 Mean Scores for Perceptions of Behavior by Experience	81
27 Three-way ANOVA for Behavior	82
28 Mean Scores for Perceptions of Achievement by Race	84
29 Mean Scores for Perceptions of Achievement by Gender	85
30 Mean Scores for Perceptions of Achievement by Experience	87
31 Three-way ANOVA for Perceptions of Achievement in School A	88
32 Three-way ANOVA for Perceptions of Achievement in School B	89
33 Mean Scores for Perceptions of Students’ Self-image	91
34 Mean Scores for Perceptions of Students’ Self-image by Gender	92
35 Mean Scores for Perceptions of Self-image by Experience	93

Table		Page
36	Three-way ANOVA for Perceptions of Achievement	95
37	Three-Way ANOVA for Perceptions of Self-image	96