

Dress Code Should Be Banned In US Academics

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Dress Codes, Equality, and Institutional Authority

The dress code in educational institutes in the United States has been required to enforce the idea of equality among students through “school-appropriate clothes”, especially in for-profit schools and colleges. The idea of a unified dress code also gained popularity among the majority of for-profit and non-profit public institutes in the United States. Some academics believe that unified dress codes allow more authority and a sense of expression and choice for students to choose what they want to wear. However, the statement regarding dress code to enforce equality is incorrect as if it gives the students freedom of what they want to wear; there should not be any term like “dress code.” (Edwards, 2020) This paper provides a primer insight on the ‘finger-tip’ dress code policy for females and the reasons why a strict dress code in academics should be banned to allow male as well as female students to showcase their own unique personalities through their freedom of dress choice.

The idea of a dress code forces students to wear shirts passing their backsides, shorts as lengthy as capris, and crop tops. Whereas a girl is not allowed to wear shorts that are not the longest show, students are not allowed to show their own unique, charismatic personalities. In the United States, the Unified School District in 1994 was the first school district in the US to take the initiative of applying a unified dress code in Long Beach. Subsequently, other private and public academics also initiated the imposing of uniforms or a specific dress code in the schools and colleges following this policy (Anderson, 2002). The aim of this policy of dress code in US academics was to set equality among pupils by eliminating the appearance of differences and, therefore, to improve educational outcomes through the idea of equality among schools and college students. Moreover, a dress code policy was initially established to mitigate violence issues in the form of gangs (Edwards, 2020). However, for many years in the United States, students’ uniforms or dress codes have become a controversial policy in US academics.

Nonetheless, the policy of a unified dress code for male and female students has numerous crucial issues as well, despite the benefits of equality a specific dress code offers. In this regard, the policy raised strict restrictions regarding the promotion of sexism, and it also raised the extra expenditures for the parents. Furthermore, a dress code or a uniform limits the student’s expression of their own distinguishing personality, which subsequently limits the development of a sense of individuality. It is an undeniable fact that childhood is the stage of life where an individual starts developing his/her personal identity, and what he/she develops as a child sticks to him/her for the rest of his/her life. Finkelstein, in this regard, puts forward his stance that enforces the idea of dress as the main

indicator of the development of the identity as, being children, an individual starts stamping his/her personality to the route of self-growth through the arrangement of different unique things. (Lovett, 2013)

The reason why a dress code should be banned in the early ages between 6 and 12 years, as well as in the teenage years from 13 to 18 years, in US academics, is that these are significant years of improvement in a child's life. It has been seen in schools around the United States that students of "middle childhood and early adolescence" rebel against the dress code in the schools because they feel that "they are forced" to wear what they do not like as per their choice. Another reason might be that the dress code follows some similar basics and rubrics, whereas children want to be trendy in their clothing choices and, therefore, feel restricted and think that their self-expression is not appreciated. (Anderson, 2002)

Gender Discrimination and Restrictions on Female Students

Another negative impact that originates from the dress code policy among students is the discrimination of gender by dividing the clothes into sex categories. This obstacle limits the clothing choice for females as they are restricted to wearing skirts covering knees, closed necklines, and long-sleeved blouses so that fellow male students and staff cannot be "provoked" and "distracted." Ironically, a dress code's main aim is to make the learning environment equal for all and is a source of "distraction" for men as the administration believes that a girl's free attire choice "provokes" the males to become wild and, therefore, males show "negative behaviour" due to "inappropriate" attire. In America, states where the weather is extremely hot, such as Miami, Florida, California, Hawaii, and others, the administration finds the strict dress code policy irreplaceable, and female students are forced to wear long-sleeved blouses with closed necklines and lengthy shorts to cover their bodies. (Zhou, 2015)

Furthermore, an important yet notorious dress code policy is "finger-tip", which discriminates against male and female sex in academics and, therefore, targets female students due to dress code regulations in the classrooms. Before 1900, this dress code policy for female students was not updated. Many schools around the United States, especially private academics, use gendered-specific language such as girls should not "show cleavage" to distract other students, including male staff and students in particular. Moreover, offensive words like "male response" or a "male going wild" to your "spaghetti straps" are a female student's fault as she is luring males and causing "negativity", which highlights the issue of victim-blaming in US academics (Zhou, 2015). It shows that "dress coding" is not a way to conducive and equitable learning in the classrooms as it is supposed in the eyes of policymakers, but rather an unfair way to target female students. While a dress code in a mixed education is supposed to make a more conducive learning environment with prospective self-development opportunities, it does the opposite by placing all the focus on females' bodies and taking

the focus off education.

One of the victims of gendered-specific discrimination, Nikki Belsham from a county of Florida, states his traumatic struggle during her academic period when she was advised to put “duct tape over the holes” in her jeans and witnessed many of her female class fellows suspended over not following this policy. She further adds that her daughter now is still going through the same trauma during her academic career since nothing has been fixed yet. She finds shopping for “school-appropriate clothes” tasks for her daughter quite difficult and annoying sometimes as her skinny 14-year-old daughter cannot fit the shorts that can pass this “finger-tip” shorts length policy. She argues the administration and policymakers’ discrimination is why a boy at the same school or college is not being questioned over the length of his shorts and is not forced to wear his shorts according to the “finger-tip” policy. (Anderson, 2002)

Student Resistance and the Case Against Dress Codes

In the autumn of 2014, a campaign was initiated to strike against the dress code imposed on females forcefully to raise their voices against gender discrimination. The movement with the hashtag “IAMMoreThanADistractioN” argued that instead of sending girls back home due to “inappropriate” dress code and slamming them for their non-covered knees, academics should focus on instilling knowledge in children’s minds as this is the main purpose of education. The participants of that movement claimed that they were harassed throughout their academic careers and called bad names due to their clothing choices. However, they put forward their demands that the administration, along with policymakers, should focus on teaching males to improve their behaviours. The main focus of that movement was to highlight the fact that females are not “sexual objects”, and they have their own reasons, choices, and preferences in terms of clothing. (Zhou, 2015)

The main conclusion regarding the discussion of why a unified dress code should be banned in academics around the United States is that the purpose of an equitable and conducive learning environment, which a dress code is supposed to serve, is often overestimated. Consequently, genders are discriminated against; children’s mental health is compromised, women’s rights are constrained, extra expenditures are imposed, and therefore the policy of dress code emphasizes divisiveness. (Edwards, 2020) Eventually, dress code policy brings psychological and financial harm to children as well as their families. Allowing children at an early stage to support self-expression and instil knowledge in their minds is what today’s America needs to educate its people about their sense of uniqueness. Nonetheless, if this initiative were not taken in US academics, where people of different genders, colours, creeds, and distinct personalities come to become good human beings, it would lead to the reduction of self-esteem in prospective multi-talented female individuals. (Lovett, 2013)

In my opinion, in a nutshell, if dress code policy does not bring disciplinary, academic, and ethical improvement in the performance to which it is consigned, it should be banned to encourage self-

expression, equality, and comfort in the students. However, if the administration sees any clothing choice crossing the ethical line, the individual should be informed and warned in a proper way rather than enforcing victim-blaming. Besides, it is time for academics in the United States to support female individuals not only in terms of discipline and education but also in self-expressing themselves according to their own styles, character, preferences, and feelings. A general rule of thumb is people express themselves through their clothing choices. Nonetheless, the dress code limits their personalities as well as their sense of self-expression.

Works Cited

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