

UNIFIED SCHOOL UNIFORM POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' CONDUCT IN OSUN STATE

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Abstract

One of the main objectives of secondary school education is the development of students both in character and learning. Thus, this should also form one of the bases for any policy related to school. Thus, this study investigated unified policy implementation and students' conduct in Public secondary schools in Osun State. Two research questions, the main hypothesis, and four operational hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. A descriptive research design was adopted to carry out the study. The population of this study comprises 7984 teachers in 397 public secondary schools in Osun state. The secondary schools were categorized into the three senatorial districts using stratified random sampling techniques. Proportionate sampling technique, using Research Advisor (2016) sample size determination table, was adopted to select 106 teachers from Osun-west, 174 teachers from Osun-central, and 90 teachers from Osun east senatorial districts, respectively. The sample of the study was therefore 370 teachers in the state. A researcher-designed questionnaire (with a reliability coefficient of the instrument of 0.75) was used for data collection. Percentage was used to answer the research questions, while the t-test was used to test the hypotheses formulated. The findings of the study include the following: students' attendance, truancy, cultism and examination malpractice during unified policy implementation is just above average; students' attendance, truancy, cultism and examination malpractice after unified policy implementation is just below average; there is significant difference between the students' conduct during and after the implementation of unified school uniform policy implementation; the disbursement of unique school uniforms to schools to serve the social demand of the populace; Marking of attendance should be given more priority and the observations should be followed up; and effort should be made by the school authorities to curb truancy among students. This is because truancy is rampant during and after the unified uniform policy implementation (though different).

Keyword: unified school uniform policy implementation; students' conduct

ملخص البحث

يُعدّ تنمية شخصية الطلاب وقدراتهم التعليمية أحد الأهداف الرئيسية للتعليم الثانوي. لذا، ينبغي أن يُشكّل هذا الهدف أساساً لأي سياسة مدرسية. وعليه، بحثت هذه الدراسة تطبيق السياسات الموحدة وسلوك الطلاب في المدارس الثانوية الحكومية بولاية أوسون. وقد صيغت فرضيات بحثيتان رئيسيتان وأربع فرضيات إجرائية لتجويه الدراسة. واعتمد تصميم البحث الوصفي لإجراء الدراسة. شمل مجتمع الدراسة 7984 معلماً في 397 مدرسة ثانوية حكومية بولاية أوسون. صنفت المدارس الثانوية إلى ثلاثة دوائر انتخابية باستخدام أسلوب المعاينة العشوائية الطبقية. واعتمد أسلوب المعاينة النسبية، بالاستعانة بجدول تحديد حجم العينة (المستشار البحثي، 2016)، لاختيار 106 معلمين من دائرة أوسون الغربية، و174 معلماً من دائرة أوسون الوسطى، و90 معلماً من دائرة أوسون الشرقية. وبذلك، بلغ حجم عينة الدراسة 370 معلماً في الولاية. استُخدم استبيان مُصمّم من قبل الباحث (معامل ثبات الأداة 0.75) لجمع البيانات. استُخدمت النسبة المئوية للإجابة عن أسئلة البحث، بينما استُخدم اختبار χ^2 لاختبار الفرضيات المطروحة. تشمل نتائج الدراسة ما يلي: كان حضور الطلاب، وتغيّبهم، وانحرافاتهم في العصابات، وممارساتهم في الامتحانات أثناء تطبيق سياسة الزي المدرسي الموحد أعلى بقليل من المتوسط؛ بينما كان حضور الطلاب، وتغيّبهم، وانحرافاتهم في العصابات، وممارساتهم في الامتحانات بعد تطبيق سياسة الزي المدرسي الموحد أقل بقليل من المتوسط؛ وُجد فرقاً كبيراً بين سلوك الطلاب أثناء وبعد تطبيق سياسة الزي المدرسي الموحد؛ تم توزيع زي مدرسي موحد على المدارس لتلبية الطلب الاجتماعي للسكان؛ ينبغي إيلاء المزيد من الأهمية لتسجيل الحضور ومتابعة الملاحظات؛ وينبغي على إدارات المدارس بذل جهود للحد من تغيّب الطلاب. وذلك لأن التغيّب كان متفشياً أثناء وبعد تطبيق سياسة الزي المدرسي الموحد (وإن كان بدرجات متفاوتة).

الكلمات المفتاحية: تطبيق سياسة الزي المدرسي الموحد؛ سلوك الطلاب

Background to the Study

Uniformity is the basic recognition that is used as a tool by many groups of individuals, as a symbol of identity under the emblem of such an organization. Most organizations adopt the style to promote unity, easy recognition, and oneness. Military, Para-military, health sectors, and other corporate entities adopt the policy of a common uniform to safeguard and protect the image of their organization. In recent times, the attention of the general public in Osun State has been drawn to the issue of one school uniform for all children in all public schools. Since its inception, many stakeholders considered a unified school uniform policy to improve the overall School environment and students' development. But due to the controversial nature of mandatory School uniform policies, those Educators who advocate the reform, as well as those who condemn it, are of different views. Uniform advocates present several arguments; they contend that uniforms

affect students' safety by lowering student abduction, decreasing gang activities, assisting in easy identification of strangers and intruders within the school premises and outside.

School Uniforms are used across the country, both in rural and urban school settings. School uniforms rose to prominence in public schools because of rampant publicized murders and kidnapping of school children in 1980s in Nigeria. The emergence of common uniform for all the public schools in the state led to different discussions over its effectiveness. Administrators often believe uniforms create a safer learning environment while students have said they notice little difference in the school. Some school administrators believe that uniforms can improve discipline and raise academic achievement.

Uniforms have been a stable component of private schools for many years, but have increased in public schools. One part of that challenge was the desire for all schools to include character education as a component of their curriculum to teach the students good values and good citizenship. And if it means that teenagers will stop killing each other over designer jackets, then our public schools should be able to require their students to wear school uniforms.

Additionally, some believe that school uniforms provide an equitable learning environment for students. These beliefs have kept school uniform policies in place for many years. Detractors say that uniforms are an unnecessary burden and infringe on students' First Amendment rights. In addition, some minority groups see school uniforms as a restriction on students' cultural expression of dress rights. Many school districts assume that uniforms are a way to fix student achievement and behavior problems. (Knechtle & Loesch, 2021).

According to Adesulu (2018), the administration of Aregbesola produced a system of education characterized by dilapidated infrastructure, low school enrollment, overcrowded classrooms, inadequate instructional materials, poorly motivated teachers, and poor academic performance of students. A summit on world-class education was held by the office of the government of Osun State. Stakeholders at the end of the summit agree on re-classification of the schools under the basic education system include: Elementary, middle, and high schools. Also, a comprehensive

overhead of the physical and human components of the education system was recommended. The communiqué of the summit has been adopted by the government for the implementation of its education reform agenda, in which a unified uniform was also included.

In Osun state, unified uniform is characterized by the State of Osun Crest printed with black ink as a motif on a cream colour cotton fabric with the inscription '*Ipinle Omoluabi*' at the base. The description of the crest contain: *two Elephants*- symbolise strength, service and prosperity; *Cocoa tree*- symbolises Agriculture and the natural resources of the land; *the Lion*- symbolises Yoruba nobility, dignity and courage; *Soil*- the brown colour emphasizes the unity of our skin and the soil; letter "Y" on the shield represents rivers Niger and Benue which symbolise the link between State of Osun and the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The Indigo (*aro*) colour of the upper part of the shield symbolises the common *adirewear* in Yoruba land while the Rubyred (*alaari*) colour of the lower part of the shield signifies nobility; *Ori Olokun*- represents the common origin of the Yorubas and their dexterity in technology, while the garland surrounding the *Ori Olokun* symbolises chivalry and triumph; *Sword and Mace*- the sword is the symbol of the *Obas* while the Mace is the symbol of the Legislative Arm of Government and the power of the common people as expressed by their elected representative. The male students of the Middle Schools use short-sleeved shirts and brown knickers; while, the female students make use of a brown pinafore over the short-sleeved shirt. Consequently, in the High Schools, their uniform description is characterized by yellow batik short-sleeved shirts with a vertical stripe motif used with brown trousers by the male students. While, the female students make use of the batik short-sleeved blouses with baby-yolk brown collar over below-knee brown skirts. The decision to give students a unified uniform was made with the aim of giving them a common method of identification and purpose, as well as a sense of unity and pride as submitted by the governor of the state in 2013.

Suffice to note that structure is the controversial stand of many stakeholders in elementary, middle and high schools in the state which has led to sort of insurgency against the state government because of the heterogeneous nature of the Public Schools. Some are originally owned by Christian

Missionaries while some are owned by groups of the Muslim faith who may like to retain their religious identity by the School uniforms of their choices. On the other hand, it was believed that the Educational policy in Osun state will boost the state's economy and empower citizens in term of job opportunity. Attempt to achieve this vision of the state Government, the followings have been put in place: the building of the biggest garment factory in West Africa which was named, '*Omoluabi Garment Factory*' situated in Osogbo, Osun State.

Many Christian schools and other non-sectarian private schools have utilized a school uniform policy for years, and current research indicates that public schools can benefit from school uniform policies as well. Therefore, school uniforms may represent a solution to the problem at hand, only few studies have explored the effect of school uniform on the conducts of secondary school students. This study will help to fill some of the gaps in our knowledge concerning the policy of having a unified school uniform across the entire state.

Statement of the Problem

Certain types of clothing, colours, and accessories have become representative of certain groups, activities, and occupations. Or by simply dressing alike, people can show that they belong to the same group. For example, Air Crews, Air hostesses, Doctors, Pilots, Nurses, Engineers, Army, Civil defense, among others (Kelly,2021).). Uniforms improve feelings of community by taking away a major point of competition, uniforms help students identify with one another. This translates in more successful classroom group activities. Also, as a whole, School unity is promoted by a culture that focuses on the group instead of the individual. In addition to creating some measure of at least perceived socioeconomic equality, School uniforms also level the academic playing field by removing distractions that clothing can create (Konheim-Kalkstein, 2020). Today in Osun state, with the adoption of a common school uniform for all public school attendees, it is extremely difficult to associate public school students with a particular or named

school. Besides, there is the possibility of intruders hiding under the disguise of a common school uniform to penetrate immoral act, as anybody can access and use the uniform.

Many researchers, in their respective studies, have found that school uniform has impact on students 'attendance, and schools with uniform policies have already seen significant drops in violence and behavioral problems. Konheim-Kalkstein (2020) found that principals reported increased attendance, reduced suspensions, less frequent fighting, increased test scores, and improved school performance after students began wearing uniforms. Educators and politicians across the country have considered school uniforms as a vehicle to achieve school safety, school discipline, and student achievement (Brunsma, & Rockquemore, 2021). Supporters of school uniforms contend that uniforms bring tangible benefits, including lower student victimization, reduced gang activity and fights, increased student learning, and positive attitudes toward school, and that they contribute to fewer occurrences of behavior problems (Bodine, 2020).

Gentile and Imberman (2021) reported the impact of uniforms on student achievement, attendance, and behaviour from a large urban school district in the southwest United States. They found that uniforms generated improvements in attendance in middle and high schools. However, there was little evidence of uniforms having impacts on attendance or disciplinary infractions for elementary students. In a study conducted by Drussell (2022). It was found that a unified school uniform gives more strength in promoting behaviour among students. This is because it provides no element of straight identity given to students of other schools. Despite all the findings of the previous researchers, no studies to date have explored the effect of school uniform policies on students' conduct. To this end, therefore, this study seeks to investigate the effects of unified school uniform policy implementation on public secondary school students' conduct in Osun State.

Purpose of the Study

The study is designed to investigate the difference in conduct of public secondary school students during and after unified school uniform policy implementation in Osun State. Specifically, the purpose is to:

1. To investigate the conduct of public secondary school students during unified school uniform policy implementation in Osun State.
2. To examine the conduct of public secondary school students after the unified school uniform policy implementation in Osun State.

Research questions

1. What is the conduct of public secondary school students during unified school uniform policy implementation in Osun state?
2. What is the conduct of public secondary school students after the unified school uniform policy implementation in Osun state?

Research Hypothesis

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

Main Hypothesis:

H₀: There is no significant difference in the conduct of public secondary school students during and after unified school uniform policy implementation in Osun state, Nigeria.

Operational Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in students' attendance during and after unified school uniform policy implementation in public secondary schools in Osun state, Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in truancy during and after unified school uniform policy implementation in public secondary schools in Osun state, Nigeria.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in cultism during and after unified school uniform policy implementation in public secondary schools in Osun State, Nigeria.

H₀₄: There is no significant difference in examination malpractice during and after unified school uniform policy implementation in public secondary schools in Osun State, Nigeria

Methodology

The geographical scope of this study comprised all three senatorial districts in Osun state, i.e., Osun East, Osun central and Osun West. The students' conduct was measured by students' attendance, truancy, cultism, and examination malpractice. The instrument for data collection is titled "Difference in students' conduct during and after unified school uniform policy

implementation questionnaire". A proportional sampling technique was used to select 370 teachers in public secondary schools in the state. The data collected for this study were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The percentage was used to answer the research questions formulated, and t-test statistic was used to test the hypotheses.

Data Analysis

This chapter involves the presentation of data analyzed in tables and the summary of the findings from the research questions answered using percentages and hypotheses tested using the Pearson product-moment correlation statistic.

Answering Research Questions

Research Question One: What is the conduct of public secondary school students during unified school uniform policy implementation in Osun state.?

Table 1

Conduct of Secondary School Students during Unified Sch. Uniform Policy Implementation			
S/N	Item	Positive Response	Negative Response
		F (%)	F (%)
1.	Students' Attendance	179(48.38)	191(51.62)
2.	Truancy 165(44.59)	205 (55.41)	
3.	Cultism	200(54.05)	170(45.95)
4.	Examination malpractice	232 (63.24)	138(36.76)
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.	Percentage Average	55.27	44.27

Table one revealed that 55.27 percent of the respondents (on average) thought that the level of students' misconduct during the implementation of the unified uniform policy in Osun state is high, while 44.27 percent disagreed. Since the highest percentage of the respondents agreed that there were students' attendance, truancy, cultism, and examination malpractice occurring during

unified policy implementation, it can therefore be concluded that students' attendance, truancy, cultism, and examination malpractice during unified policy implementation is just above average.

Research Question Two: What is the conduct of public secondary school students after the unified school uniform policy implementation in Osun State?

Table 2

Conduct of Secondary School Students after Unified School Uniform Policy Implementation			
S/N	Item NF	Positive Response F (%)	Negative Response F (%)
1.	Students' Attendance	259(70.00)	111(30.00)
2.	Truancy 206(55.68)	164 (44.32)	
3.	Cultism	155(41.89)	196(58.11)
4.	Examination malpractice	143 (38.65)	227(62.35)
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Percentage Average		48.72	51.28

Table two revealed that 48.72 percent of the respondents (on average) thought that the level of students' misconduct during the implementation of the unified uniform policy in Osun state is high, while 51.28 percent disagreed. Since the highest percentage of the respondents agreed that there were students' attendance, truancy, cultism, and examination malpractice occurring during unified policy implementation, it can therefore be concluded that students' attendance, truancy, cultism and examination malpractice during unified policy implementation is just below average.

Testing of Hypotheses

One main hypothesis and four operational hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance

Main Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between the conduct of public secondary school students during and after unified school uniform policy implementation in Osun State, Nigeria.

Table 3

Conduct of Students during and after Unified School Uniform Policy Implementation .

Variable	N	X	SD	P-value	Decision
Students' Conduct During Unified Uniform	370	3.45	0.94		Ho
				0.00	rejected
Students' Conduct After Unified Uniform	370	3.03	0.81		.

Level of significance- 0.05

Table 3 revealed that the p- value of 0.00 is less than the level of significance. Hence, the hypothesis states that there is no significant difference between the conduct of public secondary school students during and after unified school uniform policy implementation in Osun state, Nigeria. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between the conduct of public secondary school students during and after unified school uniform policy implementation in Osun state, Nigeria.

Operational Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in students' attendance during and after unified school uniform policy implementation in public secondary schools in Osun state, Nigeria.

Table 4

Students Attendance during and after Unified School Uniform Policy Implementation .

Variable	N	X	SD	P-value	Decision
Students' Attendance During Unified Uniform	370	2.95	0.79		Ho
				0.01	rejected
Students' Attendance After Unified Uniform	370	3.05	0.71		.

Level of significance- 0.05

Table 4 revealed that the p- value of 0.01 is less than the level of significance. Hence, the hypothesis states that there is no significant difference between students' attendance during and after unified school uniform policy implementation in Osun state, Nigeria. Therefore, it can be

concluded that there is a significant difference between students' attendance during and after unified school uniform policy implementation in Osun State, Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in truancy during and after unified school uniform policy implementation in public secondary schools in Osun State, Nigeria.

Table 5

Truancy during and after Unified School Uniform Policy Implementation

Variable	N	X	SD	P-value	Decision
Truancy	370	2.82	0.64		
During Unified Uniform					Ho
				0.02	rejected
Truancy					
<u>After Unified Uniform</u>	<u>370</u>	<u>2.35</u>	<u>0.53</u>		

Level of significance- 0.05

Table 5 revealed that the p- value of 0.02 is less than the level of significance. Hence, the hypothesis states that there is no significant difference between truancy during and after unified school uniform policy implementation in Osun State, Nigeria. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between truancy during and after unified school uniform policy implementation in Osun state, Nigeria

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in cultism during and after unified school uniform policy implementation in public secondary schools in Osun State, Nigeria.

Table 6

Cultism during and after Unified School Uniform Policy Implementation

Variable	N	X	SD	P-value	Decision
Cultism	370	2.28	0.60		
During Unified Uniform					Ho
				0.00	rejected
Cultism					
<u>After Unified Uniform</u>	<u>370</u>	<u>2.19</u>	<u>0.57</u>		

Level of significance- 0.05

Table 6 revealed that the p- value of 0.00 is less than the level of significance. Hence, the hypothesis states that there is no significant difference between cultism during and after unified

school uniform policy implementation in Osun State, Nigeria. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between cultism during and after unified school uniform policy implementation in Osun State, Nigeria

H₀₄: There is no significant difference in examination malpractice during and after unified school uniform policy implementation in public secondary schools in Osun state, Nigeria

Table 7

Examination Malpractices during and after Unified School Uniform Policy Implementation

Variable	N	X	SD	P-value	Decision
Students' Attendance During Unified Uniform	370	2.39	0.73		Ho
Examination Malpractices <u>After Unified Uniform</u>	<u>370</u>	<u>2.03</u>	<u>0.70</u>	0.01	rejected
Level of significance- 0.05					

Table 7 revealed that the p- value of 0.01 is less than the level of significance. Hence, the hypothesis states that there is no significant difference between examination malpractices during and after unified school uniform policy implementation in Osun State, Nigeria. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between examination malpractices during and after unified school uniform policy implementation in Osun State, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The findings from the answering of research question one showed that students' attendance, truancy, cultism, and examination malpractice during unified policy implementation are just above average. This conforms to the findings of Konheim-Kalkstein (2020), who found that principals reported increased attendance, reduced suspensions, less frequent fighting, increased test scores, and improved school performance after students began wearing uniforms. Supporters of school uniforms contend that uniforms bring tangible benefits, including lower student victimization, reduced gang activity and fights, increased student learning, and positive attitudes toward school and that they contribute to fewer occurrences of behavior problems (Sheppard, 2020).

The finding from the answering of research question two showed that, students' attendance, truancy, cultism and examination malpractice after unified policy implementation is just below average. This conform to the findings of Draa (2022) which indicated that school uniforms help students to better concentrate on their work. Draa (2022) stated that students who attended schools that had a uniform policy attended school "more frequently, and when in school concentrate[d] on their education rather than their social arrangements". Draa (2022) concluded that, as a result of higher attendance rates and increased concentration from the school uniform policy, academic performance increased

The findings from the testing of the main hypothesis showed that there is a significant difference between the students' conduct during and after the implementation of the unified school uniform policy in Osun State. This finding conforms to that of Borders, Young, Wester, Murray, Villalba, Lewis, and Mobley (2021), who opined that a key issue behind School uniform initiatives is the disciplining in schools, especially because of safety concerns. According to Borders et al (2021), uniforms provide a measure of "control" over students' bodies, especially those of young males who might be gang members and, therefore, use uniform policies to self-identify their gang status and perpetrate evil.

The findings from the testing of operational hypothesis one showed that there is a significant difference in students' attendance during and after the implementation of the unified school uniform policy. This finding, Gentile and Imberman (2021) corroborate the finding that the impact of uniforms on student achievement, attendance, and behaviour from a large urban school district in the southwest United States. The Authors found that uniforms generated improvements in attendance in middle and high schools. The findings of Gentile and Imberman (2021) corroborate this finding that the impact of uniforms on student achievement, attendance, and behaviour in a large urban school district in the southwest United States. The Authors found that uniforms generated improvements in attendance in middle and high schools. However, there was little evidence of uniforms having an impact on attendance or disciplinary infractions for elementary students.

The findings from the testing of operational hypothesis two showed that there is a significant difference in truancy during and after the implementation of the unified school uniform policy. In

a related study conducted by Adeyegbe (2022). It was found that a unified school uniform gives more strength in promoting behaviour among students. This is because it provides no element of straight identity given to students of other schools.

The findings from the testing of operational hypothesis three showed that there is a significant difference in cultism during and after the implementation of the unified school uniform policy. This conforms to the finding of Kelly (2021) that cultism and other vices will likely be more rampant when there is no distinct uniform to identify or place students in a school. If there is a unified school uniform for all schools in a state. It is likely to be more difficult to trace a student after committing a particular offence, and once this becomes a norm, the students may seize the opportunity to get more involved in cultism.

The findings from the testing of operational hypothesis four showed that there is a significant difference in examination malpractice during and after the implementation of the unified school uniform policy. This conforms to the finding of Gentile and Imberman (2021) that a unified school uniform gives room for students to attend examinations in different schools without being noticed, especially in high schools. Since uniforms are identical and the uniform, which is the means of identification, has been removed due to the unification, examination malpractices are likely to be on the high side compared to a customized school uniform

Conclusion

Unified school uniform policy came with its own unique advantages like cost effectiveness, eradication of inferiority complex, sense of belonging, and political advantage, but it has several adverse effects too that came from an increase in truancy, students' involvement in cultism, and examination malpractices. These misconducts became rampant because of difficulties in identifying students in relation to a particular school or area. The termination of the unified school uniform showed a significant difference or reduction in all these misconducts. Harmony in schools is likely to lead to increased academic achievement and achievement of educational goals.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and conclusions, the following recommendations were made:

1. The government should maintain the eradication of unified school uniform but still maintain the distribution of unique school uniforms to schools to serve the social demand of the populace
2. Marking of attendance should be given more priority, and the observations should be followed up on.
3. Efforts should be made by the school authorities to curb truancy among students. This is because truancy is rampant during and after the unified uniform policy implementation (though different).
4. From the findings of the study, it was revealed that cultism was reduced by the termination of the policy, but it is still rampant. Efforts should be made by the school authority, with the assistance of relevant security authorities, to put an end to students' involvement in cultism in the state.
5. Examination malpractices have been reduced after the policy, but there is still a need to ensure that students don't engage in it by sensitizing students, punishing offender and blocking all avenues leading to examination malpractices.

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