

# The Influence of Teacher Dress On Student Learning in Junior High Schools: A Study in Ghana

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**Abstract:** *The moral standing of Ghanaian cultural system relating to clothing and fashion has become a yardstick of morality. One of the concerns has been whether the influx of numerous foreign dress styles in the Ghanaian society has effect on students, teachers and quality education. To addressed them correctly this thesis sought to know the history of clothing, the fashion in clothing, importance of wearing appropriate uniform, dress to the workplace, teachers as effective professionals, tastes in clothing, general effects of attire, clothing etiquette, Clothing and Fashion, Possible Negative Effects of Clothing, history of fashion trend, the Ghanaian concept of culture, the culture values, the Ghanaian dress styles, the assessment of culture and clothing identity to assess the moral standing on the impact of teachers' mode of dressing to school on students' learning environment.. The researcher employed quantitative methods of research, using instruments such as, questionnaires. The population of the study included the Students, Teachers, Parents, Education Officers and Fashion Designers. The study recommends that Schools should establish dress code policies or guidelines for teachers to ensure a professional learning environment and Teachers should be aware of the impact of their dress style on student learning and adjust their attire accordingly.*

**Keywords:** teacher dress style, student learning outcomes, junior high school education, teacher professionalism, Ghanaian educational context

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## INTRODUCTION

Ghana is endowed with rich traditions and cultures of which clothing and fashion form an integral part (Danso, Adom, Eshun & Adamtey, 2019). Fashion simply can be referred to as clothing styles

and its accessories which human uses to adorn the body as well as cover the body as seen in appearance. It also depicts the manner in which people dress, wear the hair, behave socially or do other things at a given time. In other words, it comprises all items used in covering and decorating the body. Fashion cannot be under estimated in respect to the role of art in the civilization of man. Fashion affects the life of everybody, not solely a specific section of the population but it serves as an expression of the self at a given point in time and place (Entwistle, 2023). The word ‘fashion’ can equally be expressed in other fields of social life such as a style of various activities like dancing and cooking in vogue for the period of time.

External influences have been inculcated into modern Ghanaian culture (Darley & Blankson, 2020). Clothing has been seen as an intimate part of an individual. It is one of the most personal components of daily life, and at the same time, it is an expression of the social activities embedded in the cultural patterns within a particular period. Basically, gathering information on the clothing trends of the past is necessary to enable us shape the present into the future of clothing in Ghana. The uniqueness of clothing does not only embrace the attire that an individual wear, but also when, and for what purpose or occasions as well as the message it communicates about the wearer to the public. These are the basic ingredients needed in determining the true cultural identity of people and their moral uprightness through clothing, which is regarded as the second skin. In Ghana and other parts of Africa, the trend has changed drastically towards the European ways of dressing (Dosekun, 2020). This results in the adulteration of the local culture, in which the youth of today are grossly involved. Embracing this Western culture is largely visible in the fashion dress styles of the youth in particular, today. The question therefore is, “is anything ‘western’ in terms of fashion, good for Africans as well as Ghanaians?” If the answer is ‘no’, then there is the need for us as Ghanaians in totality, to re-visit the accepted mode of dressing within its cultural context out of which modifications can be made to be in line with the local culture and its good ethics. The way a teacher dresses is very important because dressing serves as a mode of communication. A person’s personality is judged by the method of dressing. When we dress, we create an image in the eyes of other people. The problem of indecent attires, shabby dressing and blind copying of fashion styles by teachers denoting nudity are some of the causes of indiscipline in schools.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **a. The History of Clothing**

Historically, clothing dates back to the ‘Stone Age’ (20,000 BC). It occurred when man began to show concern about his or her body outfits by the use of materials available in the immediate environs and varying the techniques in making them (Skene & Murray, 2017). In the ‘Stone Age’ human culture was based on the use of tools and weapons mostly made of stones. The organization of fur into suitable covering for the body started as early as the ‘Stone Age’. These materials were developed into a more organized dressing style. People learnt to weave and sew their clothing with the following characteristics:

- i. Worn garments were triangular pieces of fabrics
- ii. Men wore diaper-like loin cloth wrap around skirts.
- iii. As the years went by, men began to wear long skirts. The women wore straight dresses which were tight fitting and had either one or two straps over the shoulders. Most of the dresses were long to the feet and the left breast was left bare.
- iv. Both men and women often wore long garments instead of skirts and dresses.
- v. Men unlike women had their mode of dressing properly outlined. The following were the reasons why men started using varieties of materials in creating clothing.
- vi. Differences in the purpose for wearing clothes.
- vii. Differences in the available resources in the community to make the clothes.
- viii. Differences in the abilities and technology in making the clothes.
- ix. Differences in clothing customs in terms of environmental factors, religious beliefs, past experiences and orientation which dictated the culture of that community (Kaiser & Green, 2022).

#### **b. Dresses to the Workplace on Education**

According to Storm (1986), dress is defined as a body covering, attachment, or treatment. It is essentially our appearance. A study by Bradford (2015), suggests that an individual's appearance is essentially non-verbal communication and influences the perception and validity of the spoken word. Teacher failure to dress appropriately has adverse impact on the way administrators, students, and parents perceive them.

Kawakami, Imafuku & Saiki, (2022) reported that in recent years there has been confusion about what is appropriate to wear at work. A whole generation has been in jeans, t-shirts, and sweaters. Popular media has proposed a shift back to a preference for formal dress in the workplace as many companies are attempting to change expectations of work place attire. Companies have been calling on fashion experts to teach their employees about appropriate workplace dress. It appears that selection of professional attire enhances occupational attributes of teachers. Attire is important and can give a degree of authority, even in today 's casual school environment.

Appropriate attire has become extremely important in many professions. The clothing industry has been quick to meet the symbolic need for attire that translates into power, success, and desired outcomes (Turner, 2019). This trend appears to be true in today's more casual world and increasingly diverse environment. It is evident that professional attire is, in fact, of major importance in winning respect in the classroom and in conveying the appropriate public image of what happens in schools. Komasi, (2018), noted that dress to the workplace is important because most workers spend 40 to 60 hours a week at their jobs. There is a lot of human interaction to consider. Appropriate dress can make the difference in receiving a job offer, appearing effective in a job role, and receiving a promotion. Understanding how dress can facilitate or hinder human

interaction in the workplace would give employees head starts on making favorable impressions at work. Most importantly, dress is a powerful communicator – especially in the workplace.

### **c. Teachers as Effective Professionals**

Olsen (2015) described professional teachers as those who have a firm grasp of the subjects they teach and are true to the intellectual demands of their disciplines. They are able to analyze the needs of the students for whom they are responsible. They know the standards of practice of their profession. They know that they are accountable for meeting the needs of their students. This definition clearly illustrates that teaching is reflective and respected and therefore teachers must be properly dressed to school.

Socket (1993) lays out a broad theory of the morale found as the “manner of conduct within an occupation, how members integrate their obligations with their knowledge and skill in a context of collegiality, and their contractual and ethical relations with clients”.

Mabagala (2016) also contends that the most critical elements of teachers’ professionalism can be classified into three categories: namely attitude, behaviour, and communication. Therefore, teachers must endeavor to dress in a manner which is acceptable to the society in order to exhibit their professionalism because one’s dress communicates volume of words.

### **d. Tastes in Clothing**

Morton (2000) stated that, taste in clothing refers to the selections and arrangements of clothing and accessories which an individual makes for herself or for others; the colours, fabrics and designs one thinks preferable for any given situation (Doh, 2019). Taste is closely related to past experiences at home and away from home. It is also influenced by an individual’s happy or unhappy experiences with different types of clothing. He further defined taste in clothing as; it bridges the gap between art and fashion;” and “good taste in the field of art is the application of the principles of design to the problems in life where appearance as well as utility is a consideration”. In a more direct way, a teacher’s dress may influence a student's learning environment and respect for the teacher as well. A teacher’s dress may inform students' perceptions that classroom activities are important. If the teacher dresses in a fashion to suggest that the classroom events or activities are important, then the student may respond by adopting more professional attitudes towards lesson and his/her studies.

### **e. General Effects of Attire**

In the realm of public speaking, "there is considerable evidence that one’s personal appearance affects how the audience will respond to the message, particularly during the opening moments of the presentation." They go on to suggest that if an audience is wearing a formal dress, "you would be wise to avoid dressing more casually" (Entwistle, 2023).

Several studies indicate that more professional dresses influence the effectiveness of a public speaker. Kwasi, William, Mensah & Peter, (2021) reported that discipline issue in Ghanaian schools perceives school disciplinary problems as caused by teachers themselves. He enumerated certain teacher behaviour, which affects students' behavior as physical appearance and teachers' personality. He mentioned shabby dressing and indecent attires by female teachers denoting nudity as causes of indiscipline in schools. A report by Morton (2000) informed that teachers' mode of dressing to school have negative effects on students' learning environment. Therefore, it is important to study the effect of the present-day teachers' dressing to school on the students' learning environment because fashion keeps on changing.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

To do this, a quantitative design was used. The identified population was based on the location and characteristics of the schools in Kwaebibirim District. Cluster Area Sampling and Simple Random Sampling were used in the study. The cluster area schools for the study were Kade, Wenchi and Otumi Circuits. These are the specific schools selected under the cluster area sampling. They are Okumaning Camp Junior High School which is under the Kade circuit, Takorasi Junior High School which is under the Wenchi Circuit and the Otumi Junior High School under the Otumi circuit. The sample size includes 445 respondents thus 400 students, 21 teachers, 8 parents, 10 educational officers and 6 fashion designers. A questionnaire was utilized to collect information so that the researcher could ask respondents about pertinent information.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Table 1 indicates the demographic and age profile of the study participants. Out of the 445 respondents who answered the questions, 400 were under the ages of 20, 6 respondents were between the ages of 20 and 29, 11 respondents were between the ages of 30 and 39 years, 22 respondents were between the ages of 40 and 49 years and 6 respondents were between the ages of 50 and 59 years. These responses represent 89.9%, 1.3%, 2.5%, 4.9%, and 1.3% respectively. 219 out of these respondents were males while 228 were females constituting 49.2% and 50.8% respectively. With regards to the educational level, all the respondents had gone through formal education. About 90.1% had experienced basic education with only 1.3% experiencing second cycle and 8.5% going through tertiary education programs (table 1). 401 of the respondents making up 90.1% were Basic students; 6 of them representing 1.3% were Sec/Tec/Voc. graduates, 38 of them representing 8.5% of the respondents were Tertiary graduates. Concerning the religious status of the respondents, 426 stated that they were Christians, 19 of them said, they were Moslems. These represent 95.7% and 4.3% respectively. The marital status of the respondents revealed that, 33 respondents were married while 411 of the respondents were not married (single), and one was divorced bringing the percentages to 7.4%, 92.4% and 0.2% respectively. The last questions of this demographical data asked for the occupations, Rank/Position and groups of the various respondents. The demographic details of respondents revealed that more than half of the sets of

questionnaires were administered to the students' groups under the ages of 20. This is because the researcher wanted to find out if really teacher's dress style had negative impact on student's learning activities. In a similar instance, fashion is more associated with the female in society than the male and turns to prevail more among the elite society. This to some extent justified the reason for more female respondents responding to the questionnaire.

**Table 1: Demographic and age profile of study participants**

Variable	Educational officers	Teachers	Fashion designers	Parents	Students
Gender					
Male	5 (50.0%)	11 (52.4%)	2 (33.3%)	3 (37.5%)	198 (49.5%)
Female	5 (50.0%)	10 (47.6%)	4 (66.7%)	5 (62.5%)	202 (50.2%)
Age range					
<20	0	0	0	0	400 (100%)
20-29	0	0	0	6 (75%)	0
30-39	1 (10.0%)	5 (23.8%)	3 (50.0%)	2(25.0%)	0
40-49	9 (90.0%)	10 (47.6%)	3 (50.0%)	0	0
50-59	0	6 (28.6%)	0	0	0
Educational Status					
Basic	0	0	0	1 (12.5%)	400 (100%)
Sec/Tec/Voc	0	5 (23.8%)	1 (16.7%)	0	0
Tertiary	10 (100%)	16 (76.2%)	5 (83.3%)	7 (87.5%)	0
Religion					
Christianity	7 (70%)	21 (100%)	6 (100%)	8 (100%)	384 (96%)
Moslem	3 (30. %)	0	0	0	16 (4%)
Traditional	0	0	0	0	0
Marital status					
Married	7 (70%)	15 (71.4%)	5 (83.3%)	6 (75.0%)	0
Single	2 (20%)	6 (28.6 %)	1 (16.7%)	2 (25%)	400 (100%)
Divorced	1 (10%)	0	0	0	0

The demographic profile of the study participants reveals a predominantly young population, with 89.9% of respondents under the age of 20. This is expected, given the focus on junior high school students. The majority of respondents (90.1%) had basic education, with a smaller proportion having secondary or tertiary education. In terms of gender, the study has a nearly equal representation of males (49.2%) and females (50.8%). This is notable, as fashion is often associated with females, and the slight majority of female respondents may provide valuable insights into the impact of teacher dress style on students.

The religious affiliation of the respondents shows a clear majority of Christians (95.7%), with a small percentage of Muslims (4.3%). The marital status of the respondents indicates that most



(92.4%) are single, with a small percentage married (7.4%) or divorced (0.2%). The occupation and rank/position of the respondents are not explicitly stated, but it can be inferred that the majority are students, given the focus on junior high school education.

The study's focus on junior high school students is fitting, given the predominantly young age demographic. However, the majority of respondents having basic education highlight a need for further research on the impact of teacher dress style on students at different educational levels (Franklin, 2023). The near-equal gender representation in the study allows for a balanced analysis of the impact of teacher dress style on both male and female students. Nevertheless, the dominance of Christianity among respondents may influence perceptions of teacher dress style, and further research could explore the impact of religious affiliation on this issue. Additionally, the majority of single respondents suggest that the study's findings may be more relevant to unmarried individuals, and further research could explore the impact of marital status on perceptions of teacher dress style (Anku, Danso & Kuwornu, 2018). Overall, the study provides a solid foundation for understanding the impact of teacher dress style on junior high school students, but also highlights areas for further exploration.

**Table 2: Responses to the impact and implication of teachers' dress styles on students' learning.**

Variable	Response	Gender		Total
		male	female	
Do students discuss or appreciate the dress styles of teachers?	Yes	186	196	382
		48.7%	51.3%	100.0%
	No	10	6	16
		62.5%	37.5%	100.0%
	I don't know	1.0	1.0	2.0
Do students sometimes dislike dress styles of teachers	Yes	188	192	380
		49.5%	50.5%	100.0%
	No	10	9	19
		52.6%	47.4%	100.0%
	I don't know	0	1	1
Does the way teachers dress to school affect students learning?	Yes	179	197	376
		47.6%	52.4%	100.0%
	No	19	5	24
		79.2%	20.8%	100.0%
	I don't know	0	0	0
Does the colour of the teachers' dress affect students' learning?	Yes	181	186	367
		49.3%	50.7%	100.0%
	No	16	16	32
		50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	I don't know	1	0	1
		100.0%	.0%	100.0%

In your opinion do students hate or dislike teachers' style of dressing in school	Yes	188	190	378
		49.7%	50.3%	100.0%
	No	9	11	20
		45.0%	55.0%	100.0%
	I don't know	1	1	2
confrontations between teachers and GES officers on teachers dressing		50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	Yes	178	190	368
		48.4%	51.6%	100.0%
	No	13	12	25
		52.0%	48.0%	100.0%
	I don't know	7 (100%)	0	7 (100%)

### The Impact and Implication of Teachers' Dress Styles on Students' Learning

Table 2 shows the responses by Cross tabulation on student views on the Impact and implication of Teachers' Dress Styles on Students' Learning. For question one, 382 out of 400 students responded yes. 48.7% of the students who responded yes were males and 51.3% were females. 16 students responded no to question one. 62.5% of those who responded no were males. 37.5% were females. For question 2, 380 out of 400 students responded yes. 49.5% of the students who responded yes were males and 50.5% were females. 18 students responded no to question two. 52.6% of those who responded no were males. 47.4% were females. For question 3, 376 out of 400 students responded yes. 47.6% of the students who responded yes were males and 52.4% were females. 24 students responded no to question three. 79.2% of those who responded no were males. 20.8% were females. For question 4, 367 out of 400 students responded yes. 49.3% of the students who responded yes were males and 50.7% were females. 32 students responded no to question four. 50% of those who responded no were males. 50% were females. For question 5, 378 out of 400 students responded yes. 49.7% of the students who responded yes were males and 50.3% were females. 20 students responded no to question five. 45% of those who responded no were males. 55% were females. For question 6, 368 out of 400 students responded yes. 48.4% of the students who responded yes were males and 51.6% were females. 25 students responded no to question six. 52% of those who responded no were males. 48% were females.

The table presents the responses of 400 students to six questions regarding the impact and implication of teachers' dress styles on students' learning. The majority of students (95-97%) responded "yes" to all six questions, indicating a strong consensus on the influence of teacher dress style on student learning. In terms of gender, the responses show a relatively even split between males and females, with a slight majority of females responding "yes" to most questions. However, among those who responded "no", males outnumbered females in most cases, with a significant majority of males responding "no" to question three (79.2%).

The study reveals a remarkable consensus among students, with an overwhelming majority (95-97%) believing that teacher dress style significantly impacts their learning (Donohoo, 2016). While



females slightly outnumber males in affirming the impact of teacher dress style, males are more likely to disagree, particularly in response to question three, where nearly 80% of "no" responses came from males. Despite this, the overall gender split remains relatively even, suggesting that both males and females are equally affected by teacher dress style. The consistency in responses across all six questions further reinforces the strong consensus among students, underscoring the significance of teacher dress style in influencing student learning (Russell, Wentzel, & Donlan, 2016).

**Table 3: responses of the Public Complaints about Teachers' Style of Dressing to School**

Variable	Responses	Educational officers	Teachers	Fashion designers	Parents	Students	Total frequency (%)
Could you remember public complaints about the way teachers dress to school?	Yes	6	14	5	7	372	404 (90.8)
	No	4	7	1	1	27	40 (9.0)
	I don't know	0	0	0	0	1	1 (.2)
In your opinion do you think students copy the style of dressing by teachers in school?	Yes	10	17	4	7	376	414 (93.0)
	No	0	4	2	1	24	31 (7.0)
	I don't know	0	0	0	0	0	
In your opinion do you think teachers would dress better if given clothing allowances?	Yes	8	20	6	7	372	413 (92.8)
	No	2	1	0	1	10	14 (3.1)
	I don't know	0	0	0	0	18	18 (4.1)

### **The Public Complaints about Teachers' Style of Dressing to School**

Table 3 shows the questions on the public complaints about teachers' style of dressing to school. For question one, 90.8% responded affirmatively while the remaining reported negatively. For question 2; out of a total of 445 respondents, 93.0% stated Yes and 7.0% stated No respectively. For question 3: out of a total of 445 respondents, 92.8% stated Yes, 3.1% stated No and 4.1% I don't know respectively.

The survey reveals a striking consensus among the public regarding teachers' dress style, with an overwhelming majority expressing concerns and disapproval. Approximately 90-93% of respondents believe that teachers' dress style is a subject of public complaint, inappropriate, and affects their professionalism. In contrast, only a small percentage (3.1-7.0%) disagreed, while 4.1% were undecided. These findings indicate that the public takes teachers' dress style seriously and expects a certain level of professionalism in their appearance. The widespread disapproval suggests a need for dress code policies or guidelines in schools to ensure teachers present themselves in a manner that aligns with public expectations and maintains a professional learning environment (Everitt, 2017).

### **Limitation**

This study has several limitations. First, the study is grounded in a specific geographic setting within Ghana, which might limit generalizability of the results to other regions or learning environments. Second, the evidence is largely grounded in self-reported student and instructor perceptions, which might be limited by personal biases or social desirability. Also, the study does not hold in common other variables that may affect student learning, including instructional routines, classroom environment, or socio-economic status. Both, the subjective characterization of what is "appropriate" or "professional" dress may vary by culture, school, and individual, and therefore affect response consistency.

### **Implication of the Study**

The study implications are of importance to the education stakeholders in Ghana. If there is an effect of teachers' clothing on students' attitudes, attention, or grades, professional appearance can then be added to teacher behavior and training. For school administrators, the research could inform the development or revision of dress codes to facilitate a healthy learning environment. It is of concern to teachers in that it puts focus on the potential with which their appearance may affect how students perceive authority, respect, and engagement in the classroom. Further, policymakers and education authorities may use the findings to inform policy guidelines that add to the quality of education through the non-verbal aspects of teacher professionalism. Finally, the study points to the importance of teacher presentation in shaping classroom culture and students' outcomes.

## CONCLUSION

The study reveals a strong consensus among students and the public regarding the impact of teacher dress style on student learning and professionalism. The overwhelming majority of respondents believe that teacher dress style significantly affects student learning and is a subject of public complaint. While there is a slight majority of female respondents, both males and females are equally affected by teacher dress style.

## Suggestions and Recommendations

1. Schools should establish dress code policies or guidelines for teachers to ensure a professional learning environment.
2. Teachers should be aware of the impact of their dress style on student learning and adjust their attire accordingly.
3. Further research should explore the impact of teacher dress style on students at different educational levels and in various cultural contexts.
4. Schools should consider providing guidance on appropriate dress styles for teachers, particularly for new teachers.
5. The study's findings suggest a need for teacher training programs to address the importance of professional attire in the classroom.
6. Schools should encourage open communication between teachers, students, and parents regarding teacher dress style and its impact on student learning.

## Declarations

### Ethics approval and consent to participate

Not applicable.

### Consent for publication

Not applicable.

### Conflict of interest statement

The author reports no conflicts of interest.

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