

The Impact of Indecent Dressing on the Academic Performance of Students in Tertiary Institutions, a Case Study of Ho Polytechnic in Ghana

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ABSTRACT

Education is considered to be the bed-rock of development of any nation; hence the call by governments for “education for all”. However, certain developments over the past years seem to be militating against this vision. Notable among them is the craze for the so-called fashion which has resulted in nudity among the teaming youth on Ho Polytechnic campus. This paper therefore sought to investigate the impacts or effects nudity or indecent dressing has on the academic performance of Ho Polytechnic students in Ghana. This was done by employing the descriptive (qualitative) method of research to describe the relationship between variables. The research strategy used was a case study using students (203), teaching (126) and non-teaching staff (21) of Ho Polytechnic as the accessible population. Data were collected for the study by the employment of the survey technique in which 450 questionnaire copies were administered to the accessible population. This was combined with the participant observant approach where indecent dressings were observed and recorded. A main finding of the study is that about 60% of Ho Polytechnic students dress indecently. And out of this, about 80% are females while 20% are males. The study further revealed that provocative dressing or indecent dressing destructs the attention of both students and lecturers during lectures. Also, some leakages of examination questions on Ho Polytechnic campus can be attributed to sexual favours from lecturers as a result of indecent dressing.

Key words: Ghana, Ho Polytechnic, indecent, academic performance, students

INTRODUCTION

It is increasingly becoming obvious that indecent dressing has gradually taken over the dress pattern of students in higher institutions of learning in Ghana, and Ho Polytechnic is no exception. It has become like an epidemic spreading so fast and the earlier something is done about it, the better for the future of our desperate and vulnerable youth. What then is indecent dressing? To answer this question, it will be imperative to understand the meaning of decent dressing. Decent dressing can be explained as the proper way of dressing or the generally accepted way of dressing without exposing vital parts of the human body. Indecent dressing on the other hand is the improper and provocative way of dressing relative to the society or culture in which it is being perpetrated. This is to say that indecent dressing cannot be properly defined in isolation of the societal norms or religious boundaries. What is indecent to you in say Ghana is decent elsewhere. This brings to the fore the assertion of some school of thoughts that indecent dressing is mainly due to “foreign culture.” Meaning this way of dressing is alien to the Ghanaian culture and is therefore an affront to our very existence and identity. Egwim (2010), referred to indecent dressing in a more specific term as the attitude of someone, male or female that dresses to showoff parts of the body such as the breasts, buttocks or even the underwear particularly those of the ladies that need to be covered. In addition, there are those who believe that indecent dressing bothers so much on morality hence they ascribe some religious meanings to it. They say “indecent dressing is any type of dressing that the almighty father (the creator of the universe) abhors.” According to Olori (2003), this form of dressing is provocative, improper and morally unacceptable. These dress patterns are morally offensive and reveal the high rate of moral decadence in the society of our time.

With all these explanations, one is now clear about the type of dressing that is considered indecent in the Ghanaian context. Not a day passes without some complaint or the other by colleague students, visitors, lecturers, non-teaching staff or some other persons about the provocative dressing of Ho Polytechnic students, most especially the girls. They wear skimpy skirts, only about one inch longer than their pants to lectures and other social gatherings in and outside campus. Quite apart from the skimpy and tight fitting nature of these dresses, their transparent nature also helps in exposing their thighs and other vital parts of their body for public

view. This makes them find difficulty in climbing machines, crossing a gutter and even bending down to pick something. As if this is not enough, the girls again wear very tight trousers called 'shinnies', thereby showing the contours of their body ostensibly to entice the opposite sex. They also wear very short and transparent tops called 'show your stomach' which exposes their abdomen and breasts. Some of the boys are also guilty of indecent dressing. However, their dress pattern is different from that of the girls. Their dressing makes them look dirty and very unattractive with unkempt hairs and dirty jeans having pockets of holes deliberately created around the knees and lower parts of the trousers. The waist of their trousers is lowered at the middle of their two bottom lobes, revealing their pant which is called "Otto Fistta" (named after Otto Fistta, an expatriate coach of the Ghana Black Stars who was noted for this type of dressing). This type of dressing makes them walk by dragging their feet on the ground which is very embarrassing for any gentleman.

Research reveals that these wrongful and improper dressings of Ho Polytechnic students has a high tendency of impacting negatively on their academic performance as the output of male lecturers most especially can reduce when they concentrate on watching such provocative dressings during lectures. Female students on the other hand spend so much money in buying such useless dresses instead of spending them on their academic work. Their indecent dressing also makes them patronize discotheques, night clubs, brothels and hotels where they can have fun at the expense of their studies. There is also the possibility of some male lecturers or even female lecturers falling prey to such seductive dressings which may result in sexual favours between the lecturers on one hand and students on the other hand. This clearly will be a hindrance to quality education; as such students will not be able to perform up to the expectation of their prospective employers and consequently lead to loss of revenue to the state. Quite apart from that, poor performance of students as a result of indecent dressing can be linked to unemployment. This is so because students who dress indecently have divided attention for their studies and are therefore unable to receive adequate practical training which is a prerequisite for employment by most companies. And because such companies are not ready to spend extra money training such partially-groomed graduates, the latter find themselves joining the Unemployed Graduate Association of Ghana.

It is therefore the aim of this study to investigate the possible causes of indecent dressing, its negative impacts on academic performance of Ho Polytechnic students and the solutions thereof.

METHODOLOGY

HO POLYTECHNIC IN PERSPECTIVE

Ho Polytechnic is one of the tertiary institutions located in the Volta Regional capital, Ho in Ghana. The origin of the Polytechnic dates back as far as 1968 when it was established as a Technical Institute with the primary objective of providing pre-technical education. In 1986 the Institute became a Polytechnic. It however continued to operate as a second cycle institution until in 1993 when it was upgraded to a fully-fledged tertiary institution by the PNDC Law 321, with the responsibility of training students in the technical and vocational skills to the Higher National Diploma (HND) level. Currently, the student population stands at five-thousand (5000) and over with about two-hundred (200) staff population. The motto of the school is "*Adanu na zu kekeli*" (Wisdom should become light)

The collection of data, its analysis and interpretation in numeric form was considered as the most appropriate means of finding out the extent to which indecent dressing has affected the academic performance of Ho Polytechnic students. The descriptive (qualitative) method of research was adopted to describe the relationship between variables. The research strategy used was a case study using students, teaching and non-teaching staff of Ho Polytechnic as the accessible population. Owing to the heterogeneity of the accessible population, the Random Sampling technique was used to arrive at the sample population. This represents 30% of the accessible population (1500). Therefore in all, 450 questionnaires were administered to all the sample population but only 350 were retrieved for this study.

The questionnaire was structured for respondents to provide information on:

- The definition of decent dressing.
- The understanding of indecent dressing.
- Types of indecent dressing.
- The reasons why some students dress indecently.
- The effects of indecent dressing.
- The effects of indecent dressing on academic performance.
- How to curb indecent dressing among students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of respondents interviewed. More females (56%) participated in the study than males which points to the fact that more females are involved in indecent dressing on Ho Polytechnic campus than the males. The results further showed that majority of the respondents (47.7%) were in the age brackets of 18 – 30 years and 31- 40 years which belong to the youthful category. This is not surprising, since the youth are the core groups who perpetrate indecent dressing. In addition, most respondents were students of Ho Polytechnic (58%), teaching staff of lectureship grade (36 %) and non-teaching (6 %).

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of respondents

Characteristics	Number (n)	Percentage (%)
Sex		
<i>Male</i>	196	56.0
<i>Female</i>	154	44.0
Age Range (years)		
<i>18-30</i>	105	30.0
<i>31- 40</i>	167	47.7
<i>41 -50</i>	49	14.0
<i>Above 50</i>	29	8.1
Educational level		
<i>Hnd</i>	150	43.0
<i>1st Degree</i>	49	14.0
<i>2nd Degree</i>	119	34.0
<i>PhD</i>	32	9.1
Status of respondents		
Students	203	58.0
Teaching staff	126	36.0
Non-teaching staff	21	6.0

Source: Field Data (2008)

UNDERSTANDING THE MEANING OF DECENT DRESSING

For a study such as this, it is necessary to understand the meaning of decent dressing so as to lay a foundation for setting the topic in the right perspective. According to Yahaya (2013) a decent dressing, of course, is part of human life, because it elicits respect and protects the person's dignity. Decent dressing by students attracts respect from lecturers, guards, classmates and most significantly protects you from being the target of rape and failure. A random sampling of the sample population revealed that 150 respondents representing 42.8% of the accessible population described decent dressing as the proper way of dressing which does not expose vital parts of the body. (Table 2)

Table 2: Understanding the meaning of decent dressing

ANSWERS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
i) The appropriate way of dressing without exposing vital body parts.	150	42.9
ii) Wearing of long dresses and covering of the human face.	20	6.0
iii) Wearing of dresses and accessories to cover the breast, buttocks, thighs and other vital parts of the human body.	40	11.4
iv) Formal way of dressing.	50	14.3
v) All reasons stated above	90	25.7
TOTAL	350	100

SOURCE: FIELD DATA (2007)

UNDERSTANDING THE MEANING OF INDECENT DRESSING

Indecent dressing can be understood based on the prevailing norms and acceptable ways of dressing relative to the society in which it is being perpetrated. It is therefore clear and lucid that the explanation of indecent dressing is subject to societal expectations. According to a submission by Oyeleye et al (2012), indecent dressing simply means the deliberate exposure of one's body to the public. This practice is contrary to the acceptable norms and values of the society. Moral decadence on the other is a reduction in the level of morality in the society. Adeboye (2012) defined indecent dressing as the wearing of clothes that are not appropriate for a particular occasion or situation. She further explained that, it is not indecent to go naked in the bathroom, in labour room or in the bedroom with your partner. Answers .com (2013), describes indecent dressing as a way of dressing that is likely to shock or offend people. The statement further stated that parts of the body (usually sexual organs) that normally should be covered for girls would be their breasts, thighs and buttocks. For the purpose of this study, the views of respondents on the meaning of indecent dressing have been sampled in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Understanding indecent dressing

ANSWERS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
i) Pulling of trousers to the buttocks	10	3.0
ii) Exposing the breast and chest	30	9.0
iii) Wearing of short dresses that expose the thigh and underwear	50	14.3
iv) Wearing of torn or worn-out clothes.	10	3.0
v) All reasons stated above	250	71.4
TOTAL	350	100

SOURCE: FIELD DATA (2007)

CAUSES OF INDECENT DRESSING

The emergence of indecent dressing onto the Ho Polytechnic campus has multi-faceted reasons. This is so because the student population is made up of a multiplicity of young men and women from different tribes and countries with different interests, religions, training and backgrounds. Therefore, the reasons why a student of Ho Polytechnic will dress indecently are varied and depend on the willingness of the student to comply with pressures from his peers or otherwise. For instance a student who falls prey to peer pressure has the choice of resisting or accepting to dress indecently. Responses about the causes of indecent dressing have been tabulated in table 4 below:

Table 4: Causes of indecent dressing

CAUSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
i) Impunity accounts for indecent dressing	30	8.6
ii) Peer pressure	50	14.3
iii) Poor Parenting	12	3.4
iv) Covetousness r wornout	28	8.0
v) foreign influence	10	3.0
vi) All causes stated above	220	62.9
TOTAL	350	100

SOURCE: FIELD DATA (2007)

EFFECTS OF INDECENT DRESSING

Indecent dressing has negative effects on individuals, the country, and the educational process. This strange way of dressing can result in sexual harassment of the wearer, abortion, and contraction of sexually transmitted diseases, poor academic performance and even the desire to steal. Quite apart from these, there is a great possibility of indecently- dressed students becoming agents of the devil luring unsuspecting colleagues into all sort of vices including prostitution, homo sexuality and lesbianism. The effect of indecent dressing is of great interest to this study as it is the main focus for consideration. Table 5 below illustrates responses on some of the effects of indecent dressing.

Table 5: Effects of indecent dressing

EFFECTS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
i) Sexual harassment	30	8.6
ii) Abortion	20	6.0
iii) Sexually Transmitted Diseases	15	4.3
iv) Poor Academic Performance	112	32.0
v) Desire to steal	23	6.6
vi) All effects stated above	150	42.9
TOTAL	350	100

SOURCE: FIELD DATA (2007)

IMPACT OF INDECENT DRESSING ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Indecently-dressed students are victims of academic failure because they have little or no time for their studies. Most of such students are concerned with how to look good and appear in the latest provocative dress. Several of them battle with carry over courses with the consequences of staying longer in the school than is normal to graduate. Some of them even graduate with weak grades and some may not graduate at all having outlived their studentship in the Polytechnic and not being able to pass the prescribed courses. Some of them become confrontational and frustrated. If they are not thugs, they are armed robbers, prostitutes, home or marriage breakers, drug traffickers or addicts. The direct impacts of indecent dressing on academic performance of Ho Polytechnic students have been outlined in table 6 below.

Table 6: Impact of indecent dressing on academic performance

IMPACT	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
i) Lack of concentration in class	25	7.1
ii) Seduction of lecturers	20	6.0
iii) Victimization of students	40	11.4
iv) School drop-outs	25	7.1
v) Awarding of marks for sexual favours	60	17.1
vi) Leakages in examination	20	6.0
vii) Gross insubordination to lecturers	30	8.6
viii) All impacts given above	130	37.1
TOTAL	350	100

SOURCE: FIELD DATA (2007)

CURBING INDECENT DRESSING

In order to curb indecent dressing on Ho Polytechnic campus, very practical initiatives must be embarked upon to educate the student populace about the potential dangers associated with it. This is necessary to prevent further decline in the academic performance of Ho Polytechnic students. Recommendations aimed at addressing indecent dressing should be directed towards finding a lasting solution to this menace. Since it is evident that indecent dressing bothers so much on morality, it will be prudent that Ho Polytechnic students are taught lessons on morality and the strict adherence to our cultural norms. The elucidation of the good aspects of the Ghanaian culture by scholars to students will also go a long way to help in eliminating indecent dressing from Ho Polytechnic campus, because indecent dressing is partly caused by the infiltration of foreign culture into the country. Table 7 below tabulates some of the views shared by respondents.

Table 7: Curbing indecent dressing

SOLUTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
i) Lessons on morality should be taught	10	3.0
ii) Students who dress indecently to lectures should be sacked from the lecture halls	20	6.0
iii) A dress code or a uniform in consultation with the fashion department should be introduced.	120	34
iv) There should be an award for decently dressed students at the end of every academic year.	40	11.4
v) The Guidance and Counseling unit of Ho Polytechnic should organize programmes to educate students about indecent dressing.	40	11.4
Rules and regulations concerning dressing should be formulated and included in the students' Hand book	90	26
The stakeholders of tertiary institutions should be involved in instituting measures to harmonize dressing in all tertiary institutions.	30	8.6
TOTAL	350	100

SOURCE: FIELD DATA (2007)

CONCLUSION

The rate at which indecent dressing has infiltrated into the moral fibre and academic progression of Ho Polytechnic students is alarming. Most female students are now preoccupied by what to put on to seduce the opposite sex than what to read to become someone responsible in future. Some of the male students also spend their precious time wearing tattered dresses all in the name of fashion, with little consideration for moral uprightness. All these immoral acts of indecent dressing are being perpetrated with impunity without recourse to the fact that Ho Polytechnic is not a “jungle” but an educational institution where knowledge is impacted. In order to be a beneficiary of quality education or holistic education, one requires to be dedicated, hardworking and serious with their books. Having divided-attention or loosing concentration during lectures as a result of provocative dressing is an affront to the vision of quality education. It is therefore necessary that all stakeholders of education in Ghana be proactive in coming out with measures to stop indecent dressing on tertiary campuses, especially on Ho Polytechnic campus. If it could be possible, there must be a dress code for all Ho Polytechnic students which should be included in the Students' Handbook for consumption by students. This code should be

enforced by setting up a task force made up of security men on campus and lecturers. Any student caught on Ho Polytechnic campus dressed indecently in contravention to the code should be rusticated from the school. This will serve as a deterrent to others. Ms Best (2012) supports this recommendation by stating that dress codes will make students imbibe the culture of appearing decent even after graduation. Also, this study proposes that the school in consultation with the fashion department could come out with uniforms for both male and female students to curtail indecent dressing. Quite apart from that, the Guidance and Counseling Unit of the school should be resourced to educate students on the dangers of indecent dressing and its possible effects on their studies. By these, indecent dressing on Ho polytechnic campus will be brought to a minimum.

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