

Impact of Uniform, Grooming, And Haircut Policies on Diverse Gender Characteristics and Pregnant Students in one State College of Bicol Region: Basis for Policy Improvement

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ABSTRACT:

The impact of school policies on uniforms, grooming, and haircuts have a major influence on the day today experiences, identity, and wellbeing of the students. This study intends to determine the impact of uniform, grooming, and haircut policies on with diverse gender characteristics and pregnant students in one state college of Bicol Region, providing evidence as a basis for more inclusive and equitable policy improvements. Using a quantitative approach with 2,426 students, the majority are 20 years old and below, female, single, heterosexual, and mostly cisgender, feminine, and with a family monthly income of less than Php 20,000.00. The findings indicate that the existing policies have an impact on the physical, psychological, academic, social and economic wellbeing of students. The challenges experienced are discomfort with gendered clothes, religious and cultural issues, and strict implementation of prescribed school uniform. Peer support and negotiation are the most commonly used coping mechanisms but they are not adequate to address the challenges. The findings indicate that there is the need to have inclusive and flexible policies which observe gender diversity and pregnancy needs. Recommendations involve the need to come up with gender-neutral and maternity-friendly uniforms, developing gender-awareness activities, and establishing policy review on a continuous basis. These inclusive practices can foster equity, safety, and wellbeing and wider implementation of equitable policies in educational institutions.

Keywords: uniform; grooming and haircut policies; gender diversity; policy improvement

Introduction

Schools and other education settings are complex learning communities, involving many different roles and functions. For schools to be safe, supportive environments where students can learn and thrive, there needs to be clear

procedures, structures, and expectations in place. Policies are a formal way of documenting the procedures and values of a school (Watts, 2022). Student academic engagement and school performance have a positive correlation with

effective school policy implementation (Borja et al., 2024).

Kim and Lee (2022) indicated that inclusive and flexible uniform policy has a positive impact on the mental well-being of students, self-esteem, school engagement, and in the case of marginalized students. Such policies would help to reduce the adverse effects of strict dress codes and contribute to more tolerant school atmosphere. (Temkin, et al, 2022) found out that creating school environments that support students' health and well-being is critical for helping them thrive. For students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, non-binary, or another non-heterosexual and/or non-cisgender sexual orientation or gender identity (LGBTQ+), research demonstrates that affirming policies which provide explicit, enumerated protections (i.e., a specific list of protections) are associated with reduced rates of bullying and suicide, among other outcomes. According to Cardinal (2021), positive school climates foster an optimal learning environment in which students feel safe and supported, and are in a greater position to thrive in terms of academic performance, better relationships with peers and staff, and overall social-emotional well-being. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ) students often have to navigate more challenges and hostile school climates compared to their heterosexual peers because school practices, policies, and curricula tend to prioritize heteronormative structures. Significant work is required to challenge these structures, such as by implementing zero-tolerance policies, LGTBQ-inclusive curricula and mandatory professional development for educators, and by creating safe spaces for LGTBQ students within schools.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have a long-standing commitment to address violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity or expression (SOGIE) in Asia-Pacific schools under UNDP's Being LGBTI in Asia initiative. As a part of this initiative, UNDP and UNESCO aim to strengthen regional

leadership, advocacy and mobilization for increased awareness of the importance of education sector responses to violence based on SOGIE in the Asia-Pacific region, and to scale up the availability of comprehensive evidence-based programmes to prevent and respond to violence based on SOGIE in educational institutions (UNESCO Office Bangkok and Regional Bureau for Education in Asia and the Pacific. 2018). The Sustainable Development Goals 4 states commit to "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all." In line with international human rights law, LGBT students have the right to an education free from violence and discrimination, that promotes respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms (United Nations Human Rights. 2019).

Schools are often unsafe for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) students; they frequently experience negative or hostile school climates, including bullying and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity at school. Negative school climates and discriminatory experiences can threaten LGBTQ students' well-being. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) students often experience negative school environments, where they are subject to victimization based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. As a result, LGBTQ students are more likely to report negative physical and mental health outcomes than their peers (Russell et al., 2021).

School and district leaders, educators, and school staff have a significant opportunity and responsibility to create learning environments in which all students can thrive and achieve their full educational potential. Fostering a sense of belonging and connectedness in school are crucial for putting all students on a path to success. However, many LGBTQ students are left feeling unsupported in their schools. To ensure that school learning environments are supportive of all students, it is critical to implement specific policies and procedures that support LGBTQ youth, affirm their identities,

promote safe and healthy learning environments, and advance equity and respect for all in our schools (GLSEN, 2022). Empirical studies continue to point to the absence of full and up-to-date evidence regarding how students feel about school uniform policies, revealing that uniform mandates are not well-researched as seen in the perspective of students (Yoxsimer and Sanchez, 2022).

As stated in the institution Student Handbook, Chapter 3, C., Student Dress Code, Use of Official Uniforms, "Every student shall at all times wear properly the prescribed uniform, except during Saturdays and wash days, stormy weather, or when there is granted exemption by the Student Director, and during wash day, the students are expected to wear decent and proper civilian clothes." The current statement presents several limitations regarding gender inclusivity. The need to enhance the statement arises from the desire to create a more inclusive and respectful learning environment for all students, regardless of gender identity or expression, offer dress code guidelines that are flexible and cater to diverse needs and preferences, and ensure a clear and accessible process for requesting exemptions from the dress code when necessary (CSPC Student Handbook).

The current uniform, grooming, and haircut policies in this state colleges may not fully consider the diversity of students' gender identities, expressions, and body types. Students raised several issues with the researchers at the Center for Gender and Development: first, the current dress code may restrict students from authentically expressing their gender through clothing choices. Second, the uniform options might not be comfortable or inclusive for all genders and body types. Third, the existing grooming and haircut regulations may unfairly target certain genders or gender presentations due to potential bias. The current uniform options may not meet the additional needs of pregnant students, potentially causing discomfort and hindering their participation in school activities.

Despite this evidence, there is limited research focusing on how the prevailing policies impact the students, in particular in the Bicol Region of Philippine higher education. This gap presents the necessity to study the physical, psychological, social, and economic impacts of school uniform and grooming policy on gender diverse and pregnant students. This plays an important role in creating inclusive and fair learning environments in which every student is comfortable, respected and enabled to identify themselves.

This research was necessary to identify areas for improvement. By understanding student experiences, the research pinpoints aspects of the dress code that create challenges for gender diverse characteristics and pregnant students. The research informed the development of a more inclusive policy, ensuring that the current dress code is fair, respectful, and accommodates the diverse needs of all students. To promote gender equity, a revised policy will create a more inclusive learning environment where all students feel comfortable expressing themselves and participating fully in school life. This research aimed to provide the necessary data to enhance the existing dress code policy towards a more inclusive and equitable one for all students in one state college of Bicol region.

This study attained the following objectives, to identify the profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex assigned at birth, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, program, year level, family monthly income, occupation of parents, ordinal position in the family, disability; to assess how uniform, grooming, and haircut policies impact gender diverse and pregnant students along with physical, psychological, academic performance, and economic factors; to determine challenges experienced with uniform, grooming, and haircut policies among diverse gender characteristics and pregnant students; to evaluate the coping mechanisms of diverse gender characteristics and pregnant students to address the impact of the uniform, grooming, and haircut policies; and to propose a plan for policy improvement on school uniforms, grooming, and haircuts for gender diverse characteristics and pregnant students in

one state college of Bicol Region that are more inclusive and equitable for all students.

According to Yuan (2023), in the process of growing up, the student's age is an important period for the beginning of individual "sexual cognition", in which the student group realizes the difference between the sexes and the different aesthetics shown by different genders. Stephenson (2023) stated that adolescence is a time of self-discovery and identity formation, when young people begin to establish a sense of who they are, what they believe in, and where they fit in the world. However, more than 75% of mental health problems occur before the age of 25. Young individuals can face difficulties as they cope with a combination of physical, emotional, and social changes, while also striving to maintain a balance between academic or work commitments and their social life.

Liu et al., (2021) pointed out that family background and sibling role play a major role in influencing the self-concept and social conduct of students, which may have an impact on how they experience inclusive policies in schools. According to Nguyen and Lee (2020), the level of resilience and social competence in the middle children can be higher, which can help them adapt to various and inclusive learning environments. Martinez and Gomez (2021) emphasized that sibling position has a wide range of impact depending on the culture and family setup. It implies that firstborns, in certain situations, will take up leadership roles that make them more resistant and self-sufficient. Knowing these family roles will be of great help to policy makers and formulate conducive environments that are sensitive to the different backgrounds of students.

The study by Hernandez et al. (2022) claimed that unmarried students tend to say that they feel more free and less inhibited to explore and express their gender identities in educational environments but are also prone to societal pressure which suppresses openness. Chang and Nguyen (2020) stated that that unmarried young people tend to have less social limitations that are traditionally imposed on married people, and

therefore may have more freedom to express gender and experiment with identity. These findings support the need to develop inclusive policies to support the various civil statuses because single students might be more likely to encounter problems related to gender expression in the absence of the additional burdens of marital responsibility.

Cheng and Liang (2021), cited that women are the predominant students in the population of universities in different regions. They further highlight the need to have inclusive policies that express gender diversity, particularly in populations that are marginalized such as the intersex students. The study of Cumming-Potvin and Symons (2022), which found out that dress codes perpetuate gender binaries and discriminate against gender-diverse learners. Imposing binary (male vs. female) uniform rules leads to a threat of strengthening exclusion. Policies need to recognize non-binary and intersex students to avoid enforcing a strict binary. Nowicki (2022) stated that dress codes disproportionately affect girls and LGBTQ students; it supports the point that policy enforcement (uniforms, grooming) can harm sexual minority students and those who avoid disclosure. Nguyen and Pham (2022) cited that a significant proportion of students do not want to state their sexual orientation because of stigma. Likewise, Kumar and Singh (2022) emphasized that cultural taboos and fear of being discriminated against also tend to make students hide their sexual orientation.

School policies such as uniforms are essential in the provision of a safe and well organized learning environment. Clear policies are an interface between management of schools, teachers, students and the legal system maintaining that procedures and values are maintained (Watts, 2022). Singh and Burnes (2020) noted that gender-sensitive policies establish a benevolent and respectful atmosphere, which minimizes cases of discriminatory and bullying actions depending on gender identity or expression. They cite that these policies will be essential in advancing equity and inclusivity, particularly to the disadvantaged groups.

School is the learning phase of children's life. They are learning everything it takes to be a good citizen, a responsible family person, and a successful human. What people most struggle in their life is identity. Uniform offers them the identity of a student. Every school has a different uniform, and that also creates a sense of belongingness. Moreover, school uniforms also prevent intruders. Anyone trying to mix in the students will be easily identified when students are wearing uniforms (School Uniforms Australia, 2022).

Kim and Lee (2021), cited that uniform policies have a positive effect on academic motivation and social differences among students. School uniforms can also be an integrative instrument where social pressures are reduced as much as possible, and students can focus more on education as opposed to issues that are related to their appearance and in so doing create a more fair academic setting. Martinez and Lin (2020) asserted that the standard policies must be adaptable to the best they are not accidental, and this may result in some discomfort or exclusion to the detriment of the academic benefits. Strict policies can reduce the existence of positive outcomes by instilling a sense of inferiority or uneasiness towards some groups.

The recent recommendations suggest that educational institutions need to actively engage with students, parents, and carers when updating the uniform policies, policy choices related to the well-being of students and remove gender-specifications, letting students choose the clothing that would match them and be comfortable (Human Rights Campaign, 2023). In June 2022, a group of transgender students made headlines after Miss Trans Global 2020 Mela Franco Habijan gifted them with a graduation photoshoot after they were barred from participating in their graduation rites due to their school's dress code and haircut policy. Department of Education National Capital Region later issued a memorandum allowing students to choose school uniforms aligned with their sexual orientation, gender identity and (gender) expression, also known as SOGIE.

However, the Philippines has yet to pass the SOGIE equality bill, which seeks to end gender-based discrimination and violence in the country (Baltar, 2022).

School uniforms are a keyway of developing a sense of togetherness among students and staff, but the topic is still one of the most widely debated outside of schools (North Anglia International School). Schools and other educational institutions reinforce deeply rooted patriarchal and heteronormative attitudes and practices, and hence are less accepting of homosexuality. Furthermore, schools and other educational institutions often maintain gender stereotypes through the treatment of students based on their sex at birth rather than their gender identity or expression and pressure those gender non-conforming students to alter their preferred gender expression while at school. In that sense, gender non-conforming gestures, appearance, including school uniforms, postures, and even hairstyles are reasons for violence (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2018).

School regulations on clothes become quite challenging as strict dress codes and uniforms are regarded as detrimental to students' self-expression as well as global efforts towards diversity in an educational environment. Despite the fact that school uniforms may have a positive effect on academic performance and discipline, dress code regulations are a threat to individuality, cultural diversity, and gender fluidity that schools should foster among their students (StudyCorgi, 2022). The uniforms have no direct impact on academic performance, yet directly impact physical and psychological health. Girls, ethnic and religious minorities, gender-diverse students and poorer students suffer harm disproportionately from poorly designed uniform policies and garments that do not suit their physical and socio-cultural needs. Paradoxically, for some students, uniform creates a barrier to education that it was originally instituted to remedy (Reidy, 2021)

Methodology

This research study employed a descriptive research design. Descriptive design aims to provide an overview of the prevailing situation, while correlational research seeks to identify connections between variables, enabling the anticipation of future occurrences based on existing understanding. According to Dovetail Editorial Team (2023), descriptive research enables researchers to precisely and methodically describe a population, circumstance, or phenomenon. Although the quantitative method is more transparent and easier to measure, the

qualitative data, including an open-ended survey question would have contributed to a better idea of subtle student experiences, subjective knowledge, and contextual elements that shape perceptions of uniform policies. Qualitative data would enable a deeper assessment of the impact of uniform, grooming, and haircut policies on with diverse gender characteristics and pregnant students. The respondents of this study were 2,426 students of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions, and sex characteristics at a state college in the Bicol Region, all of whom were willing to participate in the study and provided honest information.

Results and Discussions

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents in Terms of Age

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
20 years old and below	1368	56.39	1
21-25 years old	1012	41.71	2
26-30 years old	32	1.32	3
30 years old and above	14	0.58	4
Total	2426	100.00	

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents in Terms of Sex Assigned at Birth

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Male	742	30.59	2
Female	1675	69.04	1
Intersex	9	0.37	3
Total	2426	100.00	

Table 3. Distribution of Respondents in Terms of Sexual Orientation

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Heterosexual	1261	51.98	1
Bisexual	425	17.52	3
Homosexual	228	9.40	4
Pansexual	59	2.43	5
Asexual	27	1.11	6

Prefer not to say	426	17.56	2
Total	2426	100.00	

Table 4. Distribution of Respondents in Terms of Gender Identity

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Bigender	418	17.23	3
Cisgender	1096	45.18	1
Genderqueer	190	7.83	5
Pangender	30	1.24	6
Transgender	196	0.99	7
Demiboy/Demigirl	24	8.08	4
Prefer not to say	472	19.46	2
Total	2426	100.00	

Table 5. Distribution of Respondents in Terms of Gender Expressions

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Androgynous	317	13.07	4
Masculine	447	18.43	2
Feminine	1121	46.21	1
Gender Neutral	123	5.07	5
Prefer not to say	418	17.23	3
Total	2426	100.00	

Table 6. Distribution of Respondents in Terms of Civil Status

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Single	2425	99.92	1
Married	1	0.08	2
Total	2426	100.00	

Table 7. Distribution of Respondents in Terms of Family Monthly Income

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
less than Php 20,000.00	1016	41.88	1
Php 20,001.00- Php 25,000.00	720	29.68	2

Php 25,001.00- Php 30,000.00	242	9.98	3
Php 30,001.00- Php 35,000.00	156	6.43	4
Php 35,001.00- Php 40,000.00	128	5.28	5
Php 40,001.00- Php 45,000.00	58	2.39	7
Php 45,001.00- Php 50,000.00	42	1.73	8
Php 50,001.00 and above	64	2.64	6
Total	2426	100.00	

Table 8. Distribution of Respondents in Terms of Ordinal Position in the Family

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Firstborn	630	25.97	2
Middle Child	1534	63.23	1
Youngest Child	164	6.76	3
Only Child	98	4.04	4
Total	2426	100.00	

2. Impact of Uniform, Grooming, and Haircut Policies on Diverse Gender Characteristics and Pregnant Students.

Table 9. Physical Impact of Uniform, Grooming, and Haircut Policies on Diverse Gender Characteristics and Pregnant Students

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
1. Variety of uniform styles offered to accommodate different body types and genders (e.g., loose-fitting options, plus sizes).	3.38	Has Impact	6
2. Availability of religious attire that adheres to uniform guidelines.	3.37	Has Impact	7
3. Uniform design features that promote safety in workshops, labs, or outdoor activities.	3.50	Strong Impact	2.5
4. Comfort and fit of uniforms for gender-diverse students.	3.47	Has Impact	4.5
5. Enforcement of uniform policies for all genders.	3.29	Has Impact	8
6. Specificity of the policy regarding hair length and style.	3.14	Has Impact	9.5
7. School uniform might minimize distractions related to fashion choices, allowing students to focus on their studies.	3.06	Has Impact	11
8. Uniforms can make it easier to identify students potentially enhancing school security.	3.50	Strong Impact	2.5

9.	Uniforms eliminate competition based on clothing brands.	3.14	Has Impact	9.5
10.	Uniforms can help identify students and employees quickly in case of emergencies.	3.57	Strong Impact	1
11.	Schools with flexible uniform policies might allow pregnant students to wear maternity versions of uniforms or looser clothing options for added comfort as their bodies change.	3.47	Has Impact	4.5
Average Weighted Mean		3.35	Has Impact	

Table 10. Psychological Impact of Uniform, Grooming, and Haircut Policies on Diverse Gender Characteristics and Pregnant Students

Indicators		Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
1.	Wearing uniforms, prescribed grooming and haircuts enhances school pride, unity, and community spirit.	3.41	Has Impact	4
2.	School uniform increases a sense of belonging and school pride.	3.45	Has Impact	3
3.	Uniformity minimizes visual distractions, allowing students to focus on teachers and classmates.	3.32	Has Impact	8
4.	Uniforms eliminate the stress of picking out outfits and the pressure to follow the latest trends.	3.36	Has Impact	7
5.	Wearing the same uniform fosters a sense of community and belonging within the student body.	3.37	Has Impact	5.5
6.	I am proud to be representing my school in school uniform.	3.60	Strong Impact	1.5
7.	Uniforms minimize socioeconomic disparities in clothing, allowing students to focus on academics.	3.37	Has Impact	5.5
8.	Students dressed in uniform are better perceived by teachers and peers.	3.60	Strong Impact	1.5
9.	Wearing the school uniform makes excited about going to school.	3.30	Has Impact	9
10.	Do not have to worry about whether the clothing choices will be acceptable to their peers.	3.27	Has Impact	10
11.	Uniforms can empower pregnant students to express their individuality through their talents, personality, and participation in school activities	3.20	Has Impact	11
Average Weighted Mean		3.37	Has Impact	

Table 11. Academic Performance Impact of Uniform, Grooming, and Haircut Policies on Diverse Gender Characteristics and Pregnant Students

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
1. School uniforms keep us to focus more on their schoolwork, rather than social appearances.	3.38	Has Impact	4
2. Largely reduced absenteeism, as well as improved my academic achievement.	3.30	Has Impact	5
3. Increases commitment to learning and achievements.	3.52	Strongly Impact	2
4. Students don't feel pressure to wear expensive or trendy clothes, fostering a more inclusive environment.	3.58	Strongly Impact	1
5. Adhering to the dress code fosters a culture of respect for rules and authority figures.	3.50	Strongly Impact	3
6. Uniform policies save valuable class time because they are easier to enforce than a standard dress code.	3.27	Has Impact	6
7. School uniforms make getting ready for school easier, which can improve punctuality.	2.36	Moderate Impact	8
8. Wearing uniforms, prescribed grooming and haircuts increase level of confidence and self-esteem.	2.28	Moderate Impact	10
9. Promotes a sense of equality among students.	2.12	Moderate Impact	11
10. Uniforms can create a sense of unity and belonging within the student body.	2.40	Moderate Impact	7
11. Schools with flexible uniform policies could allow pregnant students to wear looser-fitting garments or adjust accessories for comfort without compromising the core principles of the policy.	2.30	Moderate Impact	9
Average Weighted Mean	2.91	Has Impact	

Table 12. Social Impact of Uniform, Grooming, and Haircut Policies on Diverse Gender Characteristics and Pregnant Students

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
1. Uniforms eliminate the pressure to wear trendy clothes every day, reducing overall clothing production.	3.32	Has Impact	7

2.	School uniforms reduce the prevalence of bullying and violence.	3.14	Has Impact	11
3.	Help identify intruders in the school campus.	3.48	Has Impact	1
4.	Uniform policies can spark conversations about sustainability and responsible consumption among students.	3.35	Has Impact	6
5.	School uniform reduces the prevalence of clothing related clique.	3.29	Has Impact	8
6.	School uniforms may deter crime and increase student safety.	3.31	Has Impact	9
7.	Uniform policies save valuable class time because they are easier to enforce than a standard dress code.	3.36	Has Impact	4.5
8.	Successful school uniform programs could inspire similar initiatives in other organizations.	3.36	Has Impact	4.5
9.	School uniform gives students a set of guidelines about what is considered acceptable and unacceptable to wear.	3.37	Has Impact	3
10.	Simpler hairstyles and less frequent clothing changes could lead to shorter showers and less laundry, saving water.	3.20	Has Impact	10
11.	Schools could consider uniform styles that are comfortable and adaptable for changing body shapes during pregnancy with features like adjustable waistbands or looser fits.	3.42	Has Impact	2
Average Weighted Mean		3.33	Has Impact	

Table 13. Challenges Experienced with Uniform, Grooming, and Haircut Policies among Diverse Gender Characteristics and Pregnant Students along Environmental

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
1. Strict enforcement might lead to disciplinary action for minor infractions, causing tension between students and teachers.	3.94	High Challenge	4
2. Schools requiring well-made uniforms might place a financial burden on families, especially if multiple children attend the school.	3.95	High Challenge	3
3. Schools partnering with specific uniform suppliers might limit choices and potentially raise costs for families.	3.99	High Challenge	1
4. Uniform restrictions might conflict with religious attire or headwear, creating challenges for inclusion.	3.89	High Challenge	7
5. Certain uniforms or grooming rules might not be suitable for students with disabilities, creating logistical difficulties.	3.93	High Challenge	5

6.	Strict gendered uniforms might not be inclusive for students who identify outside the gender binary.	3.86	High Challenge	8.5
7.	Disciplinary actions for uniform or grooming violations can be stressful and impact academic performance.	3.96	High Challenge	2
8.	Gendered uniform requirements can perpetuate outdated stereotypes about clothing and appropriate attire.	3.91	High Challenge	6
9.	The pressure to conform to uniform rules can be a source of stress and anxiety for students.	3.81	High Challenge	10
10.	Students who have difficulty complying with uniform rules might feel ostracized or out of place in the school environment.	3.86	High Challenge	8.5
11.	Standard uniforms might not be designed to accommodate a growing belly, leading to discomfort and restriction of movement.	3.68	High Challenge	11
Average Weighted Mean		3.89	High Challenge	

3. Coping Mechanisms of Diverse Gender Characteristics and Pregnant Students to Address the Impact of the Uniform, Grooming, and Haircut Policies

Table 14. Coping Mechanisms Of Diverse Gender Characteristics And Pregnant Students To Address The Impact Of The Uniform, Grooming, And Haircut Policies

	Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
1.	Requests for alternative uniform options.	3.16	Often	4
2.	Visible attempts to hide non-compliant aspects (e.g., tucking long hair, wearing makeup under clothing).	3.01	Often	8
3.	Open discussions with teachers or counselors about policy challenges.	3.22	Often	1
4.	Formation of student groups advocating for policy changes.	3.15	Often	5
5.	Wearing additional accessories to express their gender identity despite restrictions.	3.04	Often	9
6.	Avoiding school events or activities due to discomfort with the uniform's gender presentation.	2.89	Often	12
7.	Increased use of hair products or styling to fit within policy limitations.	2.99	Often	10.5
8.	Requests for exemptions from specific grooming policies due to medical conditions.	3.09	Often	7
9.	Open discussions with teachers or counselors about the impact of the policy on mental health.	3.20	Often	3

10.	Binding chests or wearing constrictive uniforms to conform to gender norms.	2.99	Often	10.5
11.	Tucking long hair, wearing makeup under uniforms to express individuality.	3.12	Often	6
12.	Open communication with teachers/counselors about the impact of the policy on mental health.	3.21	Often	2
Average Weighted Mean		3.09	Often	

5. Plan for Policy Improvement on School Uniforms, Grooming, and Haircuts for Gender Diverse Characteristics and Pregnant Students in One State College in Bicol Region that are More Inclusive and Equitable for All Students.

Table 15. Plan for Policy Improvement on School Uniforms, Grooming, and Haircuts for Gender Diverse Characteristics and Pregnant Students in One State College in Bicol Region that are More Inclusive and Equitable for All Students.

AREA OF NCERN	OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PERSONS	EXPECTED OUTCOMES
1. Impact of School Uniform	Promote psychological well-being by enabling students to express their identity and feel accepted.	Gender sensitivity training, and awareness campaigns to support the knowledge and acceptance of various gender traits and pregnancy-related needs.	Student Affairs and Services Office (SASO)	Enhanced psychological well-being, leading to improved academic performance and social integration.
			Center of Gender and Development (CGAD)	
			Academic Deans	Reduced feelings of exclusion, stigma, and stress related to uniform and grooming policies.
	Ensure that school uniforms can support the physical needs of all students, including pregnant students and those with different gender characteristics.	• Conduct consultation and discussions with students (particularly SOGIESC (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics) groups	SASO	• Better comfort, mobility and safety of students with different physical needs.
			CGAD	
			Academic Deans	

to seek their feedback
on appropriate uniform
designs.

Conclusions

1. The majority of the respondents are 20 years old and below, female, single, heterosexual, and mostly cisgender, feminine, and with a family monthly income of less than Php 20,000.00. This diversity indicates that uniform, grooming, and haircut policies impact students differently depending on their SOGIESC and socioeconomic status. The profile highlights the necessity for policies that recognize and address varying needs.

2. The policies have evident physical impacts such as identification, comfort, mobility, body-fit concerns; psychological impacts like self-esteem, and identity expression, stress; academic impacts such as motivation, concentration, sense of belonging, social impacts such as increased safety, social integration, and acceptance in schools; and economic impacts like financial burden of maintaining uniforms.

3. Students are highly challenged with personal and environmental issues such as discomfort with strict gendered clothing, difficulty adhering to grooming standards, cultural and religious conflicts, budgeting constraints, and pregnancy-related uniform limitations.

4. Students often used coping mechanisms such as seeking support from peers and teachers,

negotiating with school authorities, using low-cost alternatives, and mentally adjusting to restrictive rules. While these strategies help, they do not fully resolve systemic issues, indicating the need for proactive and institutional policy reform.

Recommendations

1. The college administration may conduct review and revision of existing uniform and grooming policies to include the inclusive practices that can accommodate the gender diversity and the pregnancy needs.

2. The institution may foster a gender-sensitive environment with awareness programs and employee training that will help in understanding, respecting and supporting all students.

3. An inclusive policy framework should be developed in collaboration with SASO, Center for Gender and Development, students, and other responsible party especially those with diverse gender identities and pregnant students, to ensure their voices and experiences guide policy formulation.

4. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of the revised policies may be implemented to determine their effectiveness and to make relevant amendments to increase inclusiveness and equity.

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